

Electric Shock Treatment

Music from the End of Time

Issue One - Summer 1991

Electronic - Avant-Garde - Experimental
Hardbeat - Industrial

Inside:

Robert Anton Wilson

Controlled Bleeding

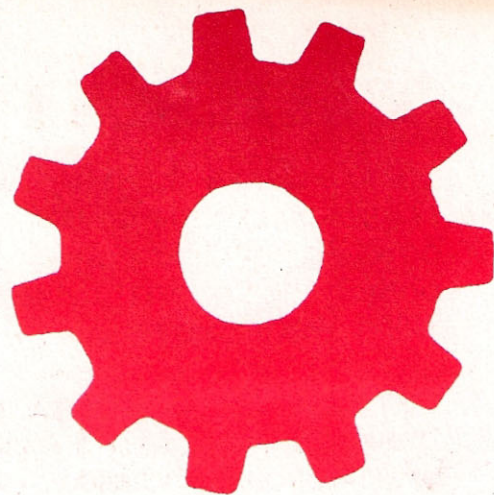
Nocturnal Emissions

Insane Music

The Use and Abuse of Fascist Imagery in Industrial Music

Over 100 reviews and more! From Front 242 to Philip Glass

£1.50



THERAPY!

So, here we are, another new magazine to add to the hordes of others covering new and innovative music both in the UK and the rest of the world. What hordes? Exactly.

E.S.T. aims to cover most forms of "new music", including experimental, electronic, industrial, ambient, hardbeat, avant-garde and other non-mainstream music. It may be outwith the commercial mainstream, but it is the music that is actually progressing beyond the bland and imitative rubbish that passes for new music nowadays.

So, there will be articles, interviews, news and reviews, all with the intent of publicising what might otherwise remain obscure, and getting news out to the people who want it. The major music magazines ignore new music because it doesn't sell, and it doesn't sell because nobody knows about it. As a result, *E.S.T.* isn't just going to be covering the underground experimental ghetto: we aim to cover as wide and eclectic a selection of music as possible. There are no barriers - this is the only way we can work.

Contributions are welcome (essential!) if the magazine is to survive (see below for guidelines). I **can** write the whole magazine myself, but it won't come out very often if I do. Criticism is also welcome - if you don't like what *E.S.T.* is doing then suggest improvements. I'm sure some people in the underground will dislike some of the more commercial music featured in this issue (and vice versa), for example. I'm not too interested in preaching only to the converted: that's an elitist and futile path.

Anything **new** sent for review will be reviewed: this is a definite policy. If you send dull rock music then don't expect a good review though! As well as music, *E.S.T.* will review videos, books, mail art, magazines - anything it receives. There is a desperate lack in the UK for an alternative networking magazine, and although *E.S.T.* isn't attempting to fill that gap, I'm still going to publicise anything that deserves publicity. If enough

non-music material is received then I'll publish reviews of such material as a separate zine or supplement, but we'll see how things develop.

See you in three months time!

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Asmus Tietchens adds to his already extremely long discography with three new releases planned for this year. Already out is *Sinkende Schwimmer*, a CD on Barooni from the Netherlands; *Seuchengebiete Vol. 2* is a CD on the wonderful Italian label Musica Maxima Magnetica; and *Monoposto* is an LP on German label Dom Elchklang, a collaboration with **C.V. Liquidsky** of Cinéma Vérité. For those who haven't heard any Tietchens in the past, his current output consists of abstract, spooky soundscapes, and in the past his instrumental work has varied greatly from the melodic and rhythmic to the nearly atonal and gothic. There will be an interview with him next issue, plus a full discography.

Re/Search have published their latest book: *The Confessions of Wanda Sacher-Masoch*, a "feminist classic", they tell us. Meanwhile the rest of us hang on tenterhooks in anticipation of promised titles like a book about Satanist Anton LaVey, *Incredibly Strange Music and Sex & Control*. The problem with Re/Search producing such wonderful books is the wait for the next one to appear!

Artaman Tapes is involved in a variety of projects in which they welcome participation. *International*

Mail Art Terror Montage Exhibition is one, inspired by **Sade's** *120 Days of Sodom*, for which they want A4 collages on any extreme or obscene subject. Documentation to all participants. *Powerpulse* will be a C60 compilation of harsh and extreme electronics, contributions welcome. *Primitive* will be a C60 of "industrial acid" dance music, evoking the most basic of human emotions. They are also very interested in the topic of "fear", especially short written pieces describing the most frightening thing that has happened or could happen to you. Don't they sound like *fun* people, girls and boys? Contact address in Directory section, and see the article *The Unacceptable Face of Freedom?* too.

Steve Moore has had a cassette released on Inner Ear Recordings: *The Threshold of Liberty*, which is an update of an older release, *The Return of the Poet*. Described as a sort

of surrealist sound collage, it's available from Inner Ear Recordings, 21B Shanter Road, Maidens, Ayrshire, Scotland KA26 9NL.

Third Mind are due to release debut albums by **Ganzheit**, **Solar Enemy** (ex-Portion Control) and **Terror Against Terror**, electrobeat alter-ego of **Lustmørd**'s Brian Williams. Also due out is a mini-album by **Front Line Assembly**, whose side-project **Delerium** is releasing a 12" and mini-album CD, whatever that may be.

Touch are cooperating with Mute Records subsidiary Grey Area to rerelease six albums by the **Hafler Trio** on CD, including four old Touch releases: *Protection*, *Brain Song*, *A Thirsty Fish*, and *The Sea Org*; the Doublevision release *Bang - An Open Letter*; and an album previously released by L.A.Y.L.A.H. (I forget the name). All six CDs are due out in autumn of this year. (Look out for loads of other good stuff on Grey Area too, including the experimental **Wire** side project **Dome**, and names like **S.P.K.**, **Neul**, **23 Skidoo**, **Non**, **Monte Cazazza** and **Die Krupps** ...) Also due from Touch are a new Hafler Trio re-

lease, *Mastery of Money*, new CDs by **Etant Donnés & Strafe Für Rebellion**, and a second volume of Albanian folk festival recordings. Due out by the time you read this should be a

mammoth **Z'Ev** retrospective, *One Foot in the Grave*, including two long CDs, a 124-page book, and some posters (weighing in at a hefty £30).

Musica Maxima Magnetica has released a CD celebration of winter solstice by **Ordo Equitum Solis**, entitled *Solstitii Temporis Sensus*, featuring Tony Wakeford of **Sol Invictus** and including a 12 page booklet. Also released in January in collaboration with Potentia Records was a CD *Born of Fire* by the much praised Welsh group **Zone**, known for their ritualistic release *Sword of the Sun*. Contact Luciano Dari, C.P. 54, 90100 Napoli, Italy.

Wonderful Dutch label Staalplaat are working on CD releases by **Etant Donnés**, **In Slaughter Natives** and **Controlled Bleeding**, plus a new series of limited edition CDs, cassettes by **Legendary Pink Dots**, **Jo Truman**, **Ain Soph** and **O Yuki Conjugate**, and a video by Etant Donnés,

NEWS

as well as a European format version of Re/Search's *Pranks* video.

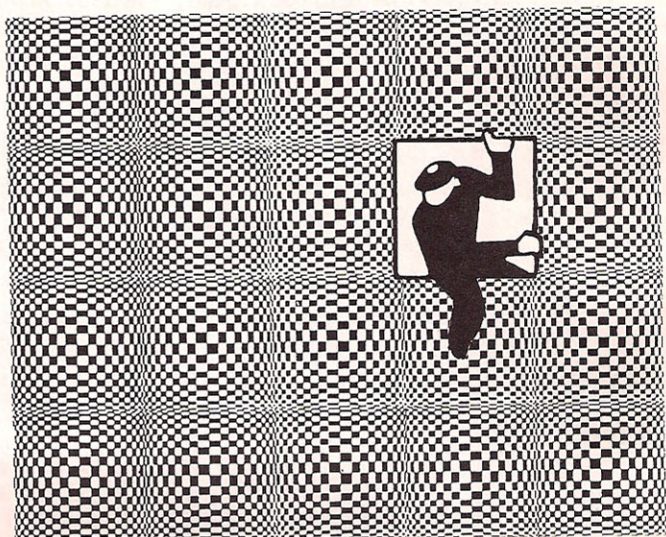
Did anyone attend the *Running Tapes* festival in Germany in mid-April? I'd be grateful for reports on this, and any similar, cassette networking gatherings. News of such events for the future is also welcome, as is news of live dates, mail-art projects, performances etc.

Cold Spring Records (see reviews elsewhere in this issue) are reissuing their entire back catalogue for a limited period, as a nostalgic trip backwards before they move on to new delights. Their catalogue includes music from people like the **Grey Wolves** and **Psychic TV**, as well as a cassette of readings by and interviews with Brion Gysin, Genesis P-Orridge and William Burroughs. Also available now are Cold Spring t-shirts. **Context** (also see review), are soon to be working on a soundtrack for a film by Justin Mitchell, who runs Cold Spring as well as writing the industrial music column "Pure" for *Spiral Scratch* magazine. Contact Cold Spring, 87 Gloucester Avenue, Delapre, Nottingham NN4 9PT.

PBK (yup, again, see reviews section) is releasing a solo LP on Canadian label Freedom in a Vacuum, while Realisation in the USA is to release a CD collaboration between himself and German musician **Asmus Tietchens** (see above). Also out on PBK Recordings is a collaboration with **Deaf Lions**, *Forming Mankind in My Own Image*, a follow-up cassette to their excellent earlier *Shamanistic*.

Somewhere in Europe, creators of strange collage music lying somewhere between the Residents and Nurse With Wound, and sometime collaborators with Death in June, are due to have their fourth cassette out this summer, which should be very interesting if past material is anything to go by. Contact: These Silences, 55 Perowne St., Aldershot, Hants. GU11 3JR.

Regelwidrig Recordings have released a cassette compilation, *A Person's Guide to Healthy Living*, featuring artists like **Muslimgauze**, **Bourbonese Qualk**, **Asmus Tietchens**, **Konstruktivits** & **Nocturnal Emissions**. A limited edition of 150 copies, it will set you back £9. Am I the only person getting fed up of all this limited edition bollocks? If the music is worth putting out at all, then why not put it out properly, for as wide an audience as possible? I don't know Regelwidrig's motivations, so I'm not pointing the finger at them, but there seems too often to be more



of a desire to put out something "special" than to put out something **lasting**. Contact: Regelwidrig Recordings, 20 Hanworth Road, Feltham, Middlesex TW13 5AB. They're also looking for contributors to their second compilation, *Stanzas on Sexual Hygiene*, to be released in a similar edition.

Hardbeat fans: the reason that experimental music dominates this issue, and coverage of hardbeat-type stuff is noticeably less, is simply due to the fact that the labels who have sent me review copies and news tend to be those working in the experimental arena. Help correct this imbalance in the future! Send everything you possibly can! The same applies to more conventional avant-garde musics (minimalism et al.): I'd **love** to feature much more of this material, but people do need to send it to me first ... Oh yes, and all you post-industrial experimentalist people - keep it up!

Alain Neffe along with Nadine Bal runs the Belgian label **Insane Music**. Their main goal is to promote the network of bands in which they are involved, but also to promote the far larger world-wide network of small innovative music groups. To this end, **Insane** has released numerous compilations, showcasing hundreds of musicians. Alain and Nadine together form **Bene Gesserit**, producing a variety of innovative types of music. Both are also involved in **Human Flesh**, an experimental group, and Alain also lists himself as a member of **Pseudo Code**, **Cortex**, **Subject**, **I Scream** and others. The text below is an interview with Alain Neffe carried out by himself ...

m u i n s a n e i c

The Start / Birth

For years I used to play with several different musicians ... we were occasional members of a group with no name ... we used to play improvisations, the musical pieces were from 10 minutes to one hour long. From this the "spirit" of **Human Flesh** was born ... but the concept really began in 1981, when I bought a second-hand 8-track recorder. I began to conceive of a system using the machine as the focus (centre) of the group. I could invite musicians to play with me on some tracks, then ask other people to add instruments / voices months or years later ... So these people could play together without even knowing each other ... it has seemed to work rather well, and I have decided to continue this way. But being as I am the only constant member of **Human Flesh**, I'm the one to decide who to add, and on which track. However, it is (still) a kind of improvisation: the musicians listen to the music once or twice while I take the sound of their instrument and add some effects (the effects are always added while recording, and never at the final mix), and we begin to record their musical part. Sometimes the result is not technically perfect, but the track possesses freshness and spontaneity. It is very important for me. The hardest thing is to find the final arrangement and to mix the track. I always wait at least one year before I mix a song. (Until I have forgotten what it sounds like). Mixing is also a kind of improvisation for me, it must be rather quickly done. I think it is also a very important part of the creation ... some tracks remain for years and years on the 8 track tape before I find something/someone to finish them. Some will never be finished.

I also work with people living on the other side of the earth, with people I will probably never have the chance to meet. Sometimes we do texts in French or English, and ask others to translate it into their language and to record it on a cassette. Then I record their voice onto the 8 track and I build a musical piece on this basis. The result often pleases me, I want to continue this way.

Description of the Music

Well ... it is rather difficult to describe it. We use acoustic and electronic instruments in a personal blend. The vocals are very important, but I use them (most of the time) like instruments. I also use the inner music of some languages. I have already used English, French, Armenian, Japanese, Italian, German, Arabian, Flemish, invented language or language in reverse, and I hope to use many others in the future. Also, I must say that **Human Flesh**'s music is most of the time dark, melancholic, sometimes desperate ... It is rarely aggressive. The main thing we express is emotion, but we never use brutal harsh noises. We are making sound "photographs", not "comics".

Industrial Music 1

Like everybody else, I was interested / influenced by noise, trash sound, very rough and aggressive music. During this period. I used to listen for hours to amplified frequencies found on my short wave radio ... I put the original sound on one channel, and its dephased echo on (through a sound-on-sound tape recorder) on the other channel. It was really amazing. I also used to record street noises and amplify them on my p.a. ... I also played live with electronics instruments and a flute ... the sound was very aggressive and very loud. Slides were projected onto a giant screen during the performance ... but all this was from 1974 to 1978 ...

When T.G. came along, I was not impressed at all, because I had experienced this style for years (I strongly believe I was not the only one). What now remains of "industrial music" is rather poor and boring. **Human Flesh** refuses to be considered as a part of the industrial scene.

Industrial Music 2: Desire to Shock

I understand that a child or an adolescent has a desire to shock. I can respect that desire as part of "normal" human behaviour. Some shocks are good ones, some images make you think and perhaps lead you to a solution. But I really hate to see adults acting like that. Adults who try to shock audiences are only acting like animals, they behave like clowns. In fact, it is a kind of sick fashion. I have never been interested in the circus, it does not make me laugh. It just makes me sleep.

Fashion

Fashion is fascism. It is a real deprivation of freedom. We don't follow any fashion, that's why our old cassettes are still selling very well.

Dope

Dope is also a kind of fashion. I hate it. Dope is the main freedom deprivation. It led several generations to death. The hippie movement whose beginnings were very interesting, was quickly damaged by drugs.

I always try to be very self-conscious, I try to feel everything that happens around me. No chimic



substance can really improve your senses. It is just an illusion.

Politics

I have no interest in today's politics. Our leaders are so rotten ... the only thing they want is power and money, they don't really care. So-called democracies are no longer countries where ordinary people feel free.

The only idealists are extremists. I understand that violence is the only way for them to express their point of view, but I hate blind violence. I cannot accept the sacrifice of innocent victims. Things are getting worse and worse.

Money

I know that our style of music will never bring us a lot of money (all the **Insane** groups are in that situation). We're outside that fashion crap (one-arm drummers, bathroom singers, musicians-robots). In fact, I am really happy when I get any benefit. All the money comes from Nadine and myself. We need money to buy cassettes, to pay for cover sleeves, matrixes, wax ... and to buy postal stamps. We sell 95% of our production outside Belgium. I suppose that the situation is the same for other small alternative groups / labels.

Insane Music Catalogue:

INS.01-12: *Various Artists*: Insane Music for Insane People Vols.1-12 (these first compilations included contributions from both the obscure and the well known, including Human Flesh, Bene Gesserit, Legendary Pink Dots, Portion Control, Merzbow, Psyclones, Suicide, Jarboe and Bill Pritchard)

INS.13: *Pseudo Code*: Pottlatch Music Vol.2

INS.14: *Pseudo Code*: Remains to be Heard Vol.1

INS.15: *Pseudo Code*: Remains to be Heard Vol.2

INS.16: *Cortex*: Souvenir/Souvenirs

INS.17: *Human Flesh*: The Third Human Attempt

INS.18: *Human Flesh*: A Collection of Ambient Music Vol.1

INS.19: *M.A.L.*: Two Faces

INS.20: *M.A.L.*: Outlaw

INS.21: *Bene Gesserit*: Live

INS.22: *I Scream*: Tomorrow is Another Day

INS.23: *Pseudo Code*: Europa [LP, deleted]

INS.24: *Pseudo Code*: [EP]

INS.25: *Bene Gesserit*: Kidnapping [single]

INS.26: *Bene Gesserit*: A High, Happy, Perverse and Cynical Cry of Joy [LP]

INS.27: *Human Flesh*: 35th Human Attempt [LP]

INS.28-33: *Various Artists*: Home-Made Music for Home-Made People Vols.1-6 (compilations including Bourbonese Qualk, D.D.A.A., Psyclones, Gerechtigkeits Liga, Vox Populi, De Fabriek and many others)

INS.34: *Various Artists*: 4 in 1 Vol.2 [LP, deleted, included Pink Dots, Glamour for Evening, Bene Gesserit and Subject]

INS.37: *Various Artists*: Insane Music for Insane People Vol.13 [LP]

INS.38: *Bene Gesserit & Lelu/Lus*: How to Share a Record Vol.1 [single]

INS.39: *Le Tombeau*: Best Of

INS.40-51: *Various Artists*: Insane Music for Insane People Vols.14-25 (including contributions from Front Line Assembly, O Yuki Conjugate, Neu Electro, Illusion of Safety, Michael Chocholak, Brume and many more)

INS.52: *Bene Gesserit & Usward Music*: Secret Mind

INS.53: *Human Flesh*: Life in Reverse / Meditation and Fears

INS.54&55: *Various Artists*: Ode to Samantha Fox Vol.1&2

[Contact: Insane Music, Alain Neffe, 2 Grand Rue, B-6190 TRAZEGNIES, Belgium]

ZINES

SINE 2

Not everything listed below is directly relevant to "music", but who cares? It's all interesting. For non-European readers, A4 pages are approximately 8" by 12", A5 8"x6" and A3 12"x17". Please mention *E.S.T.* when writing.

AUDION #16 (36pp A4, £1.75 UK; cheques to ULTIMA THULE, 1 Conduit Street, Leicester LE2 0JN)

"The New-Music Magazine" is what it says on the cover, and inside we find an uneasy melange of spacerock from the seventies and more modern experimental music. New Music it certainly isn't - Audion's roots are firmly in the electronic music of Germany and psychedelic rock of one form or another. Nonetheless, it covers a wide range of material, with reviews in this issue including people like Current 93 and Autopsia as well as a variety of avant-garde, experimental, jazz and spacerock. Poor coverage of the cassette scene, and a dislike of the more challenging, less musical, forms of sonic experimentation are offset by good international coverage, and a never-ending source of labels and bands who you are sure to have never heard of. #17 has since arrived and is similar.

BOING BOING #5 (44pp A4, \$3.95 US or try £4-5 UK; Boing Boing, P.O. Box 12311, Boulder, CA 80305, USA; or try Tower Records)

The World's Greatest Neurozine follows a similar path to Mondo 2000 (see below) and a whole rash of other American zines now appearing to provide needed intellectual comfort to all the cyberkids born with a computer in their bedroom. Obviously desperate for decent mail too, judging by the astonishingly yawn-provoking letter from Robert Anton Wilson published in this issue! Other stuff includes a very nice memetic lexicon (memes being defined here as contagious mind viruses, or infectious belief systems), comic strips, cyberfiction, smart drugs (ie intelligence enhancers), book and zine reviews and an interview with *Semiotext(e)*'s Peter Lamborn Wilson. A bit empty, and certainly not of interest to anyone not into its specific subject matter (for whom Mondo 2000 is much more recommended).

DATA KILL #1 (20pp A5, 25p cover price but I suggest you send more, from 64 Beech Grove, Brecon, Powys LD3 9ET)

Yeah! Astoundingly chaotic, frenzied and overflowing situ-punk layout complements a zine that is absolutely crammed full of BITS. Interviews with 4Q, Playground and Datblygu, plus an article on Severed Heads and some reviews and lists. Old, confused and surprisingly tasteful.

EAR Vol.15, #10 & Vol.16, #1 (68pp A4, try \$3 US/ \$6 elsewhere; Ear, 131 Varick Street Room 905, New York NY 10013-1323, USA)

"Magazine of New Music", reads the banner, meaninglessly. Honestly, what does that tell you? Kylie Minogue is bloody new music! *EAR* comes from an art / "serious" avant-garde background, with a focus on innovative composed and improvised music, ranging from the most extreme post-serialists through to the better known minimalists. Having said that, the KLF's *Chill Out* LP also gets a good review in #10 (!), and they pay some attention to experimental rock and jazz too. A free CD comes with some issues too, although non-subscribers have to pay extra to get it mailed to them. #10 deals with women on radio and women composers, discussion of chance vs design in composition, an interview with James Tenney, and pieces on David Moss and Joan La Barbara. Plus reviews, which I found more interesting than the rest of the magazine. #11 discusses music, censorship and money, interviewing Laurie Spiegel and with a very useful set of reviews too.

FACTSHEET FIVE #40 (136pp A4, \$4 US/ \$7 elsewhere; Factsheet Five, Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Avenue, Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502, USA; or Counter Distribution)

An enormous collection of countercultural reviews, mostly from the USA, but with a sizeable number from the rest of the world. Each issue takes ages to read, with sections devoted to reviews of zines, comics, poetry, music zines, music, pamphlets, books, videos, software etc etc etc. If you haven't read it before then you *must* try it once, although if you have then you'll know that it can cause a chronic case of information overload. Politics, culture, religion, food, sex, technology and all areas of human experience mix freely, with anarchists rubbing shoulders with neo-Nazis. Like everyone else on this side of the Atlantic, I spend my time moaning about our lack of an equivalent ...

THE FIFTH PATH #1 (52pp A4, \$6.50 Europe/ \$4.70 USA payable to Robert Ward, from The Fifth Path, P.O. Box 1632, Carmichael, CA 95069-1632, USA)

Foetus! Death in June! Robert Anton Wilson! Zeena La Vey! Well, if those are the sorts of people who interest you then *The Fifth Path* certainly will, because it contains interviews with all of them. This reasonably good-looking mag proclaims its rôle in a "Total War on Ignorance", and as well as the above has an odd feature on Christian comic propagandist Jack T. Chick, thoughts on survival, trainspotting in the form of a listing of Throbbing Gristle gig bootlegs, Little Guilt Shrine & Malign (bands) and numerous reviews of printed and recorded matter. Not especially interesting for people not already aware of the kind of people covered, as I expect it may be a little impenetrable.

FIST #1, #2 & #3 (32pp A3, £2 each UK; 2 Abernethy Road, London SE13 5QJ)

A ludicrously oversized zine of articles and interviews from fringe culture. #1 interviews Wire, Kathy Acker, Big Stick, Ivan Unwin and Jenny Diski, with articles on desire & consump-

tion, and the Falklands war. #2 interviews Lydia Lunch, Alan Vega, Cindy Talk, Graham Harwood, Edward Lock and Test Dept. An article on media & consumption, the Urban Funk Campaign, and various bits of art and fiction. #3 interviews Stewart Home, David Thomas, the Young Gods, Annie Anxiety, Diamanda Galas, an Archaos performer and Steve Albini. Speaks for itself, really. Plus stories, articles and reviews, aggressively uninhibited layout. Frighteningly hip - a feature on David Lynch seems almost inevitable. Excellent stuff, and a fourth issue due out soon.

FONORAMA #7 (64pp A4; \$1.50 Europe or \$2.25 elsewhere to FONOPRESS; Fonorama, P.O. Box 114, 31-829 Kraków 31, Poland)

This claims to be the first East European magazine for music collectors, with a print run of 10,000 copies. It's (nearly) all in Polish, which limits its international appeal a bit, but it's a worthy enterprise. This issue includes a calendar of famous rock birthdays; Transvision Vamp; Pet Shop Boys; "semi-legendary" Polish star Czesław Niemen; Guns'n'Roses and Kate Bush bootlegs; 60s Polish bands; and an article on the Polish band Perfect. Previous issues have included people from New Kids on the Block to New Order to ROIR.

FORCED EXPOSURE #17 (130pp A4; \$6 US, \$10 Europe; Forced Exposure, P.O. Box 9102, Waltham, MA 02254, USA)

A mammoth compendium of punk, noise-rock and strange music, with what seems to be an increasingly experimental agenda. As well as a host of dull but loud rock bands, Forced Exposure does also cover a few interesting people as well, ranging from 70s Krautrock through to New York art/ minimalism. This issue interviews MX-80, Rudy Rucker and Alexandro Jodorowsky, has fiction by Eugene Chadbourne and Richard Melzer, and "reviews" by Steve Albini. Plus a staggering selection of audio, print and video reviews that is well worth perusing, including some review by hip SF author Lewis Shiner. (Previous issues have interviewed Diamanda Galas & Glenn Branca).

FRÄCTURED #1 & #2 (44pp & 52pp A5; £1.50 each UK; Simon Moon, 4 Addison Road, Haverfordwest, Pembro. SA61 1UB)

My rival! Ha! There are only a few UK zines dealing with the same sort of music as *E.S.T.*, including Audion, Network News and Fräctured. Fräctured has so far centred its sights on what could be termed the "Vinyl Experience network", groups such as Death in June, Coil, Nurse With Wound and Whitehouse. However, especially with the second issue namedropping everyone from Jon Hassell to Amon Duul, there's some sign of a widening of horizons. #1 has features on D.I.J., Portion Control, and an "introduction to english industrial music" which inevitably fails in its attempt to deal with "many disparate types of music". News and reviews: Current 93, Boyd Rice, NWW, Sol Invictus, Hafner Trio, Nocturnal Emissions and others. Reviews are lengthy but uncritical, articles lengthy and very well thought out. #2 has features on Nurse With Wound, Laibach and Ministry. A much improved set of news and reviews, still dominated by Vinyl Experience's friends but also covering various obscure small labels. Well worth reading!

GOD-DAMNED!!! (72pp A4, £5; TOPY London, address elsewhere in this issue)

This is a copylation of "extreme fundamentalist christian propaganda", reprinting pamphlets, tracts, cartoons and publicity put out by a variety of christian groups, from the UK and the USA. Copying quality is readable,

certainly more so than some of the stuff I've payed for from similar groups, including their sister TOPY HEART. Most of the contents are pretty ridiculous, laughable stuff, showing the various christian publishers to be ignorant, bigoted, simple-minded and dogmatic. This is a fair picture of some christian organisations, but by no means all. By ignoring the more literate, better argued, superficially less silly christian propaganda, the collection presents a pretty distorted view. All the anti-occult publicity is pretty frightening (although not as frightening as the anti-gay material) but the sheer silliness of these particular propagandists tends to make you laugh, and forget how real the threat to freedom posed by such extremists is.

H23 #2 (48pp A4 approx, \$4 in US, \$7 UK; Ron Rice, NOISING-place, P.O. Box 592, Pullman, WA 99163-0592, USA)

Excellent magazine devoted to experimental music (and occasionally other art). This issue has interviews and features on Floating Concrete Octopus, Carl Howard, Sleep Chamber, Arthur Potter, Randy Greif, PGR and Conrad Schnitzler (how many of you have heard of **all** of those? How many have heard of **any**?) Also reviews of magazines and music, ranging from Nurse With Wound to Chris and Cosey to Tentatively a Convenience. Of great interest to anyone interested in avant-garde, post-industrial, experimental or strange musics, even if it's not easy for UK persons to get hold of. Issue #3, minimalist music special due May 1991 or thereafter.

HEARTCORE #2 (16pp A5, £1.30 from TOPY HEART, 6 Alcester Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 8BE)

Art and articles from Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth, including pieces on the politics of television, magick and communication, black dogs, pest control, TOPY and festivals. Lots of clippings, art and collage. Not a particularly meaty read, unfortunately.

MEMES #4 & #5 (44pp A5, £2 from Memes, c/o Norman Joep, c/o 38 Molesworth Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 4NT)

A literate and very enjoyable zine of culture and the occult, in that order. Highlights include a provocative dissection of Pauwels and Bergier's book *Morning of the Magicians* in #4, a survey of esoteric threads in late nineteenth century art and literature, and a nice selection of reviews. Very nice art and lots of modern poetry too.

MIND CRASH #1 (2pp A4, SAE from Anti-Anti)

A two-sided sheet of quotes, metaphors and linguistic metaphysics, very much in the style of a similar production called *The Bug* (available from Counter Productions). Hints of zen, Anton Wilson and the supernatural are to be found amongst these seemingly unconnected bits of text.

MONDO 2000 #2 (160pp A4 approx, price?; P.O. Box 10171, Berkeley, CA 94709-5171, USA, or try Counter Productions or Tower Records)

Gulp. The magazine for the cyberhip technophilic. Media viruses! Designer drugs! Virtual realities! Weird music! Brain machines! Nanotechnology! Computer hacking! If these are what get **you** salivating, then you probably ought to be reading Mondo 2000. For music fans, how about interviews with Mark Pauline of Survival Research Laboratories, Negativland, or arch-plagiarist John Oswald? This issue is a cyberspace / virtual reality special, with lots of enthusiastic stuff on cutting edge technology, although a distinct lack of a critical viewpoint to compensate. The editorial philosophy is a distinctly dubious one: technology will Save The World and Set Us Free! Whether you agree with such a preposterous and simplistic techno-religion or not, there's plenty of fringe stuff in here to keep most obscurophiles going for a week. Future issues promise everything from Burroughs and

Tim Leary and Brian Eno to Eastern Europe, Rudy Rucker and nanotech. Ummm, mondo. #3 has now appeared, and is slightly less impressive, with a lot of rather shallow stuff on computer hacking, futuristic fashion, and more of the same.

MUSIC FROM THE EMPTY QUARTER #0 & #1 (24pp & 32pp A5; £1 UK; The Empty Quarter, P.O. Box 87, Ilford, Essex IG1 3HJ)

The first issues of what is hoped to be a long-running source of information on the industrial and electronic music scene. Suddenly everyone seems to want to start a magazine! Already it has been criticised heavily for its commercial attitude to the scene, although given that Empty Quarter exists to make money out of this music, it's hardly a huge surprise. Anyway, #0 includes a wide-ranging and well-informed news section, a piece on Portion Control (also published in *Fräctured* #1), Eyeless in Gaza, Hard Corps, part of a Legendary Pink Dots discography, Adventures in Reality, and a few reviews. #1 has excellent news and reviews sections plus rather uninformative pieces on Venus Fly trap, Chrome, Attrition, Throbbing Gristle, Havoc, Audiofile Tapes and more LPD discography, plus ads.

N.D. #14 (44pp A5; \$3 US/ \$4 overseas; P.O. Box 4144, Austin, Texas 78765, USA)

Much-praised magazine dealing with mail-art and other forms of alternative culture, with a particular focus on experimental culture where artistic control remains in the hands of the artists. This issue interviews or features filmmaker and performance artist Carolee Schneemann, performer Scott MacLeod, mail artists Limar Kruusamäe, Lloyd Dunn, Andrej Tisma, John Held Jr. and Byron Black, and musicians O Yuki Conjugate and Gen Ken Montgomery. Presentation is every bit as delicious as the contents demand, and there is a very extensive selection of brief audio and publication reviews. It only suffers slightly from assuming the reader knows whom these people all are, and not introducing their work properly. N.D. also releases the *Fragments* series of cassettes, each coming with a booklet and featuring two artists, so far including PBK, Vidna Obmana, Zan Hoffman, AGOG, Jeff Greinke and Pierre Perrel. They also have a video due out in July. Recommended.

NETWORK NEWS #1 - #3 (24pp A5, £1 each UK; Earthly Delights, PO Box 1QG, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE99 1QG)

First three issues of the Earthly Delights zine. #1 has Nocturnal Emissions news and info, plus various minor bits and pieces. Includes an interview with Nigel Ayers. Essential reading for fans of the group. #2 includes interviews with Muslimgaze, Zoviet France and Walter Alter, zine reviews, and a thought-provoking letter from Stephan Kraus. #3 is a mixture of reviews, clippings and news, plus a review of Newcastle's experimental music festival, Earshot. Well worth a look.

OCCULTURE #1 (60pp A5, £3.33 from Temple Press Ltd)

This is an exclusively occult-related magazine produced by the Temple of Psychick Youth. For your cash you get discussion of TOPY, artwork, awful fiction, occult philosophy by Nema and Robert de Grimston, a psalm by occultists and percussionist Z'Ev, an introduction to the Esoteric Order of Dagon, Wallies and reviews. It shies clear of practical occultism in preference for talking around the occult, and as a result I found it pretty unsatisfying.

OPAL INFORMATION #17 (20pp A5, £1.45 UK / £3 USA or Canada / £2 elsewhere; Opal Information, P.O. Box 141,

Leigh-on-Sea, Essex; or try Opal Information, P.O. Box 2749, Hollywood, CA 90078, USA)

This is the 'house zine' devoted to the musicians of Opal and Land Records ie. Brian Eno, Jon Hassell, Harold Budd etc. This issue includes an interesting interview with Eno, plus lots of news of what the Opal artists are up to.

OPTION #37 (130pp A4, \$4 US/ \$5.50 overseas; Sonic Options Network, 2345 Westwood Blvd. Suite 2, Los Angeles, CA 90064, USA; also Tower Records)

A glossy magazine of "music alternatives", this issue features Brian Eno, Lights in a Fat City and the Hafler Trio amongst a gallery of mostly less interesting people drawn from rock, jazz, reggae, world music and the like. Most interesting for its large selection of ads and reviews, many of them dealing with experimental and otherwise innovative music. As a result, it uncovers plenty of great stuff amongst the dross, is open-minded and encouraging of small cassette labels, and has an unfortunate but not overwhelming American bias. (Readers in the US will no doubt find this a good thing!)

SOFT WATCH #1 (16pp A5, 4x2nd class stamps UK; c/o A Burnham, 70 Old Hinckley Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV10 0AB)

This is intended as a networking resource, a directory and review centre for as many experimental music labels and mags as possible. As such, it's a welcome arrival. The first issue contains its fair share of major omissions and mistakes, but *Soft Watch* has the potential to develop into something indispensable within only a couple of issues, relevant not only to the UK but throughout the world. Much of what is covered in #1 overlaps with *EST*'s various reviews, but plenty of it doesn't. A project that really deserves your support.

VAGUE #22 (76pp A4, £3.50 UK; BCM Box 7207, London WC1N 3XX; also from A Distribution; Counter Prods; AK Distribution)

Tom Vague finally slips over the line. Depending on your point of view, either the hippest alternative UK mag in existence, or the product of art-obsessed Saturday rebels, Vague has usually managed to tread a fine line between its editor's tedious obsessions and actually being a hell of a good read. With this (possibly final?) issue Tom gives up all pretence of giving the public all the hip and obscure stuff that they seem to want, and falls back on his old standbys of punk, situationism, and football. Interviews with Margi Clarke, Jamie Reid and Ralph Rumney make up much of the zine's meat, there's a (reasonably enjoyable) travel diary, plus bits of Stewart Home's and Jon Savage's writing. Yawn. This is 1991 and anyone still writing about the Sex Pistols is clearly brain dead. Stuck in a time warp, I'm afraid ('68 and '76), but previous issues were excellent and worth picking up if you've somehow managed to miss them.

WITHOUT A TRACE (32pp A5; 80p UK; AK Distribution)

This has been around for ages, with this particular copy printed by Copycat Press in 1988, but it's still interesting. It's motivation was supposedly to "even the balance between us and the police", and it gives copious details of police technology, forensic science, organisation and tactics, so that those who want to can go about their business without interference. It covers everything from simple fingerprinting through body secretion traces, voice identification, phone-tapping, the intelligence services to a guide to police codewords and call signs. Some of the advice is a little vague, and some is out of date (eg. genetic fingerprinting is not covered), and too much is oriented towards people in the south-east of England. But for the budding saboteur, guerilla, or ecoterrorist, it's worth a read. 99% of the people who have bought this undosee it as just another addition to their library of radical chic, but don't let that put you off!

trickster¹cosmic

An interview with Robert Anton Wilson



WHATEVER else you may think about Robert Anton Wilson, he is a gentleman. There is no other term for a man who can come off stage after speaking for two hours, jet-lagged and short of sleep, and grant an interview to a young writer in a large leather jacket. I am still amazed that he was prepared to talk to me. Perhaps it was the look in my eye; perhaps the copy of **Fortean Times** in my hand. Perhaps it was that I was dropping the names of four mutual friends including Robert Shea as heavily as possible. Perhaps it was that I appeared very stoned and possibly dangerous.

I wasn't actually stoned; but I was flying high on an assortment of antibiotics and cough remedies. Nevertheless, it gave the experience of sitting in a hotel bar next to one of the most original writers of the twentieth century a few novel twists. A TV set showing "Vic Reeves' Big Night Out" behind me did not help my state of mind at all.

In a way, the following interview can be regarded as medicine fighting a gallant but losing battle against jet-lag. Facts, if you need them, are as follows. The interview was conducted at around 10.45pm on Wednesday 27th February 1991, and was recorded on an Aiwa HF-S 150. On the right stereo channel: a white-haired American claiming to be Robert Anton Wilson, with a slow easy voice and a deep laugh full of enjoyment. On the left: James Wallis, with a cough.

JW: Quite a lot of the people in the hall tonight seemed to treat you as a guru or prophet. Do you have any problems with that?

RAW: I keep trying to blow that up by making fun of it, by talking about my own fallibility and stupidity. It seems... well, some people turn movie stars into gurus. It doesn't even mean you have any intelligence, it just means that a lot of people need gurus of some kind or another.

JW: I suppose in a sense your books like "Illuminatus", being the first - well, not the first **serious** work but the first in-depth work on conspiracy theories have made you someone who is to be respected and looked up to.

RAW: I suppose so, but it's also made me a target for paranoia by a lot of conspiracy buffs who can't explain what I'm doing except on the assumption that I'm a Government agent assigned to confuse them.

JW: I know I've heard Kerry Wendel Thornley described as the most paranoid man in America.

RAW: Just about. He was one of the first to decide I was a Government agent, or one of the first I know about.

"It's very hard to have any communication from a one-up position. Communications is only possible between equals. As an example, is there anybody here who has ever told the complete truth to anybody from the government? You can't afford to do it. Whenever anyone's in a one-up position you tell them what they want to hear."

JW: It would be pointless to ask if you are a Government agent, of course.

RAW: Well, I sometimes wonder. You know the CIA slang for somebody they're using who doesn't know he's being used? They call that a "useful idiot". Those writers who get exclusives from congressmen, and they have no idea the congressman is working for the CIA and the exclusive is a myth they've invented that they want to get into print. If the journalist takes it, they're a useful idiot. So of course I have to ask myself occasionally, have I become a useful idiot yet? (laughs)

JW: In that you're spreading disinformation and ridiculing things?

RAW: Yeah, so I gotta keep wondering about that.

JW: To what extent are you involved with the Discordians and the Church of the Subgenius these days?

RAW: I'm involved to some extent; I'm involved in a lot of things to some extent. I got a story in the latest Subgenius anthology, I put Discordian references in my books hoping to spread Discordianism, I meet other Discordians frequently. Every time I'm in Dallas I'm on the Hour of Slack, the Subgenius radio show.

JW: To what extent do you think you've become a part of the New Age movement? The stalls in the atrium tonight seemed to be concerned with a lot of New Age material, and to an extent the way you've been talking about Virtual Realities and mind expansion you seem to be almost a forerunner of the movement.

RAW: The Berkeley mob once called Leary and me "the counter-culture of the counter-culture." I'm some kind of antibody in the New Age movement. My function is to raise the possibility, "Hey, you know, some of this stuff might be bullshit."

JW: You don't seem to take very much of it very seriously.

RAW: Some of it I do take seriously. In *Prometheus Rising* and *Quantum Psychology* I'm definitely trying to teach the reader how to change their own consciousness so they don't need a guru to do it for them. I'm very definitely a spiritual anarchist.

JW: To get back for a moment to the nuts and happenings that seem to surround you, two things focused my attention quite recently. The first thing was that someone held up a fast-food restaurant demanding \$100,000, a helicopter and a copy of *The Widow's Son*.

RAW: That was in Atlanta, Georgia. The character's name was "Noid". I wrote a little story about it in my news letter, I said that "Noid got annoyed and perhaps a little paranoid too."

JW: Did he get the copy of *The Widow's Son*?

RAW: No, no, he surrendered finally, he let all the hostages go and surrendered. He was protesting a pizza commercial which he thought was insulting him.

JW: The other thing is something I've only heard rumours about: a German hacker who was using the name Hagbard Celine.

RAW: Hagbard, yes. He penetrated the entire American defence establishment. He got all through from the Naval database in Norfolk. Once he busted into that he was able to get into everything; the air command, the Lawrence Livermore laboratories where they were working on super-super weapons. He was browsing through everything, he was at it for months before they caught up with him.

JW: What I heard was that he was probably killed by CIA operatives.

RAW: The German police ruled it was suicide, but everybody in Germany that I know tells me that the CIA bumped him off. They haven't come looking for me yet.

JW: You have talked about the extent to which you are responsible for what you have written and the way that people treat them. Do you believe that you have any responsibility for people like this using your names and your ideas to do things which are not so much illegal or immoral as just plain stupid?

RAW: That's a very hard question. How can you answer a question like that without sounding pompous? I think it's the writer's responsibility - any sentence that begins "I think it's the writer's responsibility" sound pompous! I think it's the writer's responsibility to communicate as clearly as possible, which may be rather hard if you're dealing with a complex subject, your clarity may not seem like clarity at first, it may require some work on the part of the reader. But you are not responsible for every nut who gets hold of your pages because there is no defence against it, you can't prevent it. How many nuts have been inspired by the Bible? Leaving out the Inquisition and the Crusades and so on, every couple of years there's a case in America of some nut who's reading the Bible and suddenly goes out and starts shooting all the fornicators or something crazy like that. God tells him who the fornicators are so he can shoot them. And it's happened to all sorts of writers. Thomas Wolfe has a story about a guy who goes crazy and starts shooting everybody in town; and a fellow named Howard Unra in New Jersey read that book and went out and started shooting people. It certainly wasn't Thomas Wolfe's intent and I don't see how he could be blamed for it. It's the fault of public libraries and bookstores for not keeping these books out of the hands of nuts (laughs).

JW: So if your writings do have an intention, what is it? Obviously with books like *Quantum Psychology*, their intention is quite clear but is there a subtext? Do you want to alter the mind of

the late twentieth century?

RAW: And the twenty-first, yeah. At my most ambitious I want to make as big a revolution as Voltaire or Marx or Nietzsche, only I hope mine will be totally wholesome. Of course, that's hoping for a lot. On a more modest level, I just hope I give some people some good laughs, cheer them up and make them a little more optimistic because the world is suffering from terrible depression. It's a global illness.

"I very much think I'm a continuation of the surrealist tradition. The original motto of the surrealists was "Total transformation of mind and all that resembles it" and that's very much the spirit of my books. The first surrealist show where the audience came in and they found a car in the garden where it was raining inside the car but not outside it, and they passed on and came to a sign by Andrew Breton that said "Dada is not dead, watch your overcoat". At that point those people were in an alternative reality. I think it's too late for art in the old sense. We need magic, and the surrealists were masters of putting the magic back into art, which is also what I'm trying to do."



JW: How do you see the Illuminatus! trilogy these days? Has it become something of a millstone round your neck?

RAW: No, no I'm still delighted with it ... I can't write a formula book. I tried once, that was *Masks of the Illuminati*. I started out to write an ordinary detective story, and then my imagination ran away with me and out came *Masks Of The Illuminati* which is a detective novel but hardly an ordinary one.

JW: You seem to have a tremendous passion for James Joyce.

RAW: Yeah, I've published several articles on James Joyce. I would have done more except that there's not much money in writing about Joyce and I've got to have that somewhere in my consciousness when I'm writing. I can write a certain number of articles that I don't get paid for, but most of my articles I have to think about getting paid for.

JW: Was that partly what prompted you to go and live in Ireland, or was that a desire to get out of America?

RAW: A little bit of both. I wanted to live in Ireland, not just because of Joyce but because of a lot of sentimental attachments to Ireland. And I wanted to get out of the United States because Ronald Reagan gave me nightmares. I said "If that guy ever gets elected I'm going to leave the country," and I felt I was weaseling if I didn't leave. And writers don't pay tax in Ireland.

JW: Did Ronald Reagan give you more or less nightmares than George Bush?

RAW: Less. I told lots of people that Bush is going to be a lot worse than Reagan, and I'm getting a grim satisfaction out of seeing that prediction come true.

JW: What do you think the prospects are for Dan Quayle getting elected in 1997?

RAW: I don't think he will. I could be wrong, the American voters continually horrify me but I don't think they'll go that far. I think what explains American politics is that the Democrats used to be the party of the poor, and then they sold out. Television did it. It takes \$100m to run a campaign for president, \$30m to run a campaign for the Senate. So both parties are in the bag, they're both being financed by the multi-national corporations. And the poor have figured that out, there's nobody that represents them and so they don't vote. So the Republicans win all the time. It's very hard to get a third party started in the United States, it's too expensive. So most poor people and most intellectuals just don't vote, they don't have anybody representing them, the two parties are practically indistinguishable.

JW: Do you have a message for British youth, or the world's youth?

RAW: I'm awfully tempted. All these people protesting the Poll Tax, they should read up on the Gordon Riots of 1780 and find out how it's really done. Oh God. No, don't print that. The police would be on you. I couldn't resist saying it but don't print it. Do I have a less inflammatory message? The world is controlled by belief systems - BS. Don't believe totally in anybody's BS. The

second commandment is like unto the first: don't believe totally in your own BS. That's my message to the youth of the world.

JW: Also the works of Robert Anton Wilson in a nutshell.

RAW: Don't believe in them totally, they're all subject to revision. Anything can be sent back to the **Rewrite** department, or may even get followed into the **It Never Happened** department. I didn't invent them, William Burroughs invented both of those departments. I think they're very active, although most people don't know how to get access to them.

JW: Do you have influences? People whose work you follow, or at least regard as important?

RAW: Thomas Pynchon, William Burroughs. Bohm, Shel-drake, Nick Herbert, Fred Wolfe, Alan Ginsberg, Terry Southern if he'd only write something again.

JW: How do you regard Pynchon as important? Obviously he's a conspiracy theorist...

RAW: We have a lot in common. It's one of those things, like Darwin and Wallace, when the time is right a couple of people are going to be saying pretty much the same thing. There are enough differences between Pynchon and me that I think I'm a little more than just an echo of Pynchon. At least I like to believe that. Shea and I were finished with *Illuminatus!* when we read *Gravity's Rainbow* and then on the rewrite we deliberately threw in a couple of references to it, but we had worked out the structure on our own, mostly on the basis of the nut mail that Playboy gets.

JW: What was your involvement with Playboy?

RAW: Shea and I were working on the Playboy Forum, that being a discussion between the editors - that being Shea and me at that time - about the basic ideas of civil liberties and the limitations of government and the general libertarian philosophy. And since we were attacking the Government for attacking the rights of the individual on all sorts of issues like drugs and abortion, consensual sex between adults, we were getting an awful lot of nut mail from people who thought they were being persecuted by the Government, imagining the most baroque paranoid fantasies. And we started thinking of how all these people had different theories about what was wrong with the world, and suppose they were all right? Suppose all these conspiracy theories were going on at once? (laughs) So we bounced that around for a few drinking parties and then suddenly Shea said "You know, we could turn this into a novel." We should really have dedicated the book to all the paranoids, from whom we learned so much.

JW: How do you see the future? Is it rosy, is it indeterminate?

RAW: I guess it's indeterminate, but the possibility of a rosy future is at least as real as the possibility of a black future, so I prefer to put my imagination and will and energy into making the rosy future come true.

Outro

Just in case the above didn't actually mean very much to you, a few words of outroduction are in order. Robert Anton Wilson is famous for many reasons, but far and away the largest of them is his 1975 collaboration with Robert Shea on the conspiracy theory trilogy, *Illuminatus!*. This fictional journey through late sixties counterculture is influenced by most of the theories regarding global manipulation current at the time, and it in turn influenced many of the theories that came afterwards. And it's an astonishingly good read too.

He has written numerous other novels exploring the occult, conspiracies, quantum physics and

whatever else rattles around inside his brain, including the *Schrödinger's Cat* trilogy, *Masks of the Illuminati* (starring Albert Einstein, James Joyce and Aleister Crowley) and the still unfinished *Historical Illuminatus* trilogy (of which *The Widow's Son* is part), all excellent books.

Wilson has also written several books explaining

his view of personal development. These include *Ishtar Rising*, *Cosmic Trigger* (volume two of which is just out), *Quantum Psychology*, and with Koopman and acid-guru Leary, *Neuropolitics*. Throughout these, Wilson is influenced both by the optimistic acronym S.M.I.².L.E. (Space Migration, Intelligence Increase, Life Extension), and by his wide knowledge of occult systems. His beliefs combine a loathing for dogma with an optimistic faith in the ability of modern technology to solve all, partly by providing opportunities for us all to expand our minds.

Some view him as a technophiliac masturbator, filling his novels with naive personal obsessions, others see instead a fringe genius, unafraid to explore seriously areas that much of society still regards as science fiction ... Did the real Robert Anton Wilson stand up?

[The above interview has already appeared in shorter form elsewhere. This is an almost unadulterated version.]

(Q: Do you believe yourself?)

I've been fighting this for years. There is a tendency when at times I lapse into believing in what I say, but it doesn't happen very often and I think I'm conquering that bad habit. It's a habit I deeply want to get rid of, because I've discovered that people who do believe what they say are pretty thick-headed and difficult to deal with, and I don't want to be another one of them ...

Between the time of Christ and Leonardo, information doubled once. Between Leonardo and James Watt it doubled again. Between James Watt and the Wright Brothers it doubled again. That's at the rate of 1500, 250 and 150 years. Information had doubled in fifty years between 1900 and 1950. Now it's doubling every eighteen months. If you project that forward you do find, as Terence McKenna did, that information seems to be going XXXXX around 2012. I don't know what the hell that means concretely, so I'll take Terence's metaphor. He says it means our encounter with a transcendental object. I don't know what the hell that means, but it's better than not having any image at all of what we're heading towards ...

We can start reversing the damage done to the rainforests by printing our books on good honest hemp paper again. The Magna Carta was written on good honest hemp. The United States constitution was written on hemp too. All books were printed on hemp paper up until the 1930s. That's why you can look in your Grandfather's library, if you know where your grandfather's library is, and you can read the books although they're over 100 years old. In the Long Room at Trinity College you can see the Book of Kells from the eighth century, Gulliver's Travels from the eighteenth century, all these books preserved because they're printed on good honest hemp. Then the American congress that some people get happy when they smoke hemp, and Harry Enslinger told them that black people look white people in the eye when they smoke hemp, and that shows they're completely out of their heads and don't know their place any more. So Congress passed a law against it. Now our books are printed on this lousy wood paper and they all fall apart, books fall apart in two or three years, the forests are being destroyed, the greenhouse effect is building up, all because the U.S. Congress persuaded the rest of the world to go along with them on this universal narcotics convention saying "Nobody nowhere can grow no more hemp nohow." So now we've got this ecological catastrophe and our books are falling apart. It's time to go back to good honest hemp!

You can also make fuel out of hemp; hemp seeds are the richest source of oil on the planet. We can run our cars on hemp seed. Henry Ford was getting ready to convert to hemp seed cars when Congress made hemp illegal. Hemp is totally non-polluting; you can have as much traffic in London as you have now but with none of the pollution because they're all running on good honest hemp!

THE UNACCEPTABLE FACE OF FREEDOM?

No, not an article on *Test Dept.*, for those of you who expected such a thing! Instead, inspired by *Thee Grey Wolves*, I'd like to take a look at fascist imagery in "industrial" and experimental music.

As most of you will be aware, this kind of music is riddled with such imagery, both overt and covert. Experimental musicians, most notably *Throbbing Gristle*, have used the symbology of fascism, claiming that they desired to challenge preconceptions and to create a more open-minded audience. The punks made extensive use of the swastika. As part of their nihilistic rejection of society's established values, they felt the need to espouse the unacceptable, in order to adequately express their disgust with the world in which they lived. Victims of what they saw as authoritarian aggression, they responded instinctively by reflecting back that social violence in the form of an anti-social shock.

Yugoslavian avant-garde rock band *Laibach* adopt the appearance of totalitarianism to explore both our authoritarian society and the authoritarian nature of "rock" music. Often accused of being fascists, their extensive use of ironic humour acts as a reminder that they are not what they seem. They use the symbols both of Nazism and religion, and are clearly of the opinion that to be able to subvert and destroy the state you must first enter and understand it.

Others use not the superficial imagery of fascism but the real ethos of dictatorship in their attempts to provoke a response and expose control mechanisms. One example includes *Non*, who in the early eighties played concerts consisting of unbearably loud and physical rhythmic music. Audiences either fled from this authoritarian onslaught or accepted and explored the pleasure of submission.

Many of the hardbeat groups look distinctly jackbooted in their espousal of extreme physical discipline, and their replication of fascist chic throughout their presentation. Given that most of them profess to be opposed to the existing social order, they spend a lot of time replicating its style and symbols. Bands like *Manufacture*, *Front 242* and others use hard, militaristic rhythms, coupled with samples of rightwingers and religious nutcases, presenting the raw data of their info-environment without comment. We are "expected" to understand that although these bands look like fascists, they are in fact opposed to fascism. Inevitably, they attract neo-Nazis to their music whether they like it or not. Even socialists like *Test Dept* have been described as "thugs of the new left" due to their masculine, angry, violent presentation.

Others are even more dubious. *Death in June* pepper their albums with skulls, runic images and paramilitary style, and have appeared on stage in brownshirts in the past. Their love of seemingly fascist gestures extends to what they lovingly describe as "the European dream", a pan-continental supnation. Depending on your point of view this may seem a noble goal, a right-wing insanity, or just a particularly naive piece of romanticism. Staying in a similar musical clique, *Whitehouse* and their label *Come Org* have used sufficiently extreme rhetoric not only in public but also in private for even the most forgiving liberal conscience to shy away from giving them the benefit of the doubt. The blatant racism of *Whitehouse*'s William Bennett appears to have few pretensions to being a sophisticated cultural critique, despite many fans' illusions. *Whitehouse*'s live events frequently involved lavish helpings of racial abuse, alienating many of those who were sufficiently liberal to give them a chance in the first place.

And there are others: cassette artists working in this area include the likes of the *AWB* group, extreme right-wing racists who have chosen to work in the experimental electronics world, and *Con-Dom*, a solo project from the British Isles, which attempts to explore themes of control and domination through the use of a primitivist wall of noise. The cassette underground contains numerous examples of artists exploring this sort of territory, and whilst it's certainly a valid expression, it all begins to seem a little samey and unimaginative after a while.

As *T.G.* made clear, surface Nazism is very stylish. Black and red and silver make a very attractive colour scheme, and fascist insignia are extremely powerful symbols. The imagery can be traced back to the Italian Futurist movement, with its love of striking, dynamic art. Most users of motifs like the swastika, like Jim Thirlwell, of *Foetus*, explain their use simply in terms of a desire to use visuals that they like, that they find psychically resonant. Even four decades after what the Allies ridiculously claimed to be the death of fascism, the imagery retains its powerful fascination. Extremism of any sort reverberates deep within our psyche: it touches parts of the unconscious that more moderate philosophies are unable to reach.

And of course, the punks reminded us of just how provocative the swastika remained after many years. Throwing the establishment's own excrement back into its throat is sure to result in a nauseous reaction. For groups intent on outraging society, fascism was a powerful weapon. Time at last to stamp in turn on the boot that had stamped on you, even if the only methods you had for doing so were those that the authorities had themselves taught you.

It's debatable whether such tactics were ever productive, however. Certainly, they didn't change the system, only reinforcing its repressive desires. The desire to shock seemed frequently to be born more out of a rejection of society than out of any embrace of a positive alternative. Mummy won't let us play so we scream and shout - this is all that provocation often amounted to. It was based on the same emotions

as those of the screaming child. Our environment is unpleasant and destructive, but we do not feel we have the power to do anything about it. In such a situation, nihilism is the only viable option, but it rests upon a false assumption. We are **not** powerless, and to accept that we are, and do nothing but complain, can only further set back our chances of realising our true desires. Nihilism is counter-revolutionary, disempowering, and to this extent the widespread adoption of fascist imagery as a shock strategy was doomed to miserable failure.

Additionally, in adopting the violent tactics of the oppressor, punk and the other protestors were admitting that they had no alternatives to offer, thus validating the initial oppression. The authoritarian state thrives on violent rebellion, using it as its own justification.

However, many scions of industrial culture would claim that their attempts to shock were more than just screams of outrage. They would claim, as for example S.P.K. did when exhibiting violent sexual imagery in their work, that the intent of the shock was to jolt people out of their everyday slumber, to awaken in them the idea that perhaps all this extreme material **could** be treated objectively, not just the subject of a knee-jerk reaction as was usually the case. Personally, I find this pretty doubtful, as the repetition of **any** image tends only to reimprint the associations that it already had. In other words, people who found the imagery disgusting in the first place are unlikely to change their minds just because they see the imagery again.

I'm going to leave a consideration of the adoption of an aggressive, possibly fascist, **style** by groups like *Lai-bach*, *Test Dept* and the various hardbeat bands for another time. Instead, we have in front of us an example of the use of extreme imagery taken towards one logical conclusion: *Thee Grey Wolves*. By now, a century after literature and art experienced various outbursts of taboo-breaking extremism, all this may seem to be a case of retreading paths that have been walked too many times already. It may seem fair to criticise those who are still exploring the dark side of humanity of substituting the use of originality with a formula known to be good at attracting attention. Is this a fair comment on *Thee Grey Wolves*?

Named, if I'm not mistaken after a right-wing Turkish terrorist group (much as fellow extreme electronics outfit *Terre Blanche* adopt the moniker of South African fascist and head of the terrorist A.W.B. commandoes, Eugene Terre-Blanche; or as S.P.K. claimed the name of the Sozialistisches Patienten Kollektiv), *Thee Grey Wolves* began life in 1985. Its two members have also worked on solo projects as *Tactical Aid Group* and *Nails ov Christ*, and run their own cassette labels *Artaman Tapes* and *Strength Through Awareness*, the latter of which may well have renamed itself recently.

Claiming to be manifestations of the "Cultural Terrorism Network", *Thee Grey Wolves* try to adopt a uniformly extreme attitude to what they release. Their crude mail-order catalogues are peppered with crypto-fascist symbols, pictures of terrorists, Nazis and the like. Their cassette releases include "Red Terror Black Terror", "Atrocity Exhibition" and "Legion of Hell". Amongst the current projects of David Padbury (alias Crystal Knight) is "120 Days of Sodom" a planned exhibition of extreme (and probably illegal) mail-art. The intent of this last seems to be to test the limits as much as possible - to break taboos and air issues by the use of shock treatment - but whether or not this bears much relation to the Marquis de Sade's infamous novel of the same name is debatable. There was far more to "Sodom" than the desire to shock and test boundaries.

The music? Oh yes, the music! Like many other groups producing "extreme electronics", their sound is that of the inside of the experimental animal's head, the scream of the gas chamber and the agony of civilisation collapsing. At least, that's one interpretation. Alternatively, I could succinctly describe it as "unlistenable noise". In reality, the music falls somewhere between the two. Harsh, painful, chaotic noisescapes, not sufficiently disjointed or extreme as to be really unlistenable: amidst the sonic sludge there is a latent structure lurking somewhere. Out of the chaos you feel almost able to pick out subliminal themes and elements - but it's possible that this is aural hallucination.

Although primarily designed, it seems, to repel the listener, the music is listenable enough that it can seem almost beautiful once you've reeducated your ears. As atmospheric music it's fine, if a little crude, if the kind of atmosphere you like is that found inside an abattoir. As a soundtrack to apocalypse it's a failure, coming nowhere near to reflecting the horror that hides in real life. To a certain extent, it could be argued that if you've heard one wall of noise, you've heard them all, but this isn't fair. Noise music contains a far greater array of possibilities than might seem immediately evident. It can be mindless, violent, serene, obnoxious, beautiful. As far as noise = music is concerned, other artists have explored that idea far more than *Thee Grey Wolves* have done, a personal favourite being the American musician PBK, who has succeeded in his attempt to develop an attractive noise aesthetic. And, as I said above, as far as noise = statement is concerned, I believe music of any kind is never capable of presenting anything other than a debased form of real extremity.

It's easy to react to the group's imagery on a simple, instinctive, and immediate level. The imagery is repellent (to any reasonably socially aware conscience) and so why should anyone bother to look further into it? If you are opposed to fascism and are unable to decide on the basis of what the group is saying whether or not they are fascists, shouldn't you err on the side of caution? Even if you believe they are not, why should you be interested in all this unpleasant imagery anyway? If, as they claim, *Thee Grey Wolves* see it as their role to present us with information which we would rather ignore, to remind us of the true face of fascism, doesn't it seem sensible to say: "Ok, that's the true face of fascism - I know what it is, and I don't want anything to do with it"? And if I want to see what fascism's about, I don't need *Thee Grey Wolves* to tell me: there are plenty of **real** examples to choose from without needing their secondhand representations.

Taboo-breaking is usually acknowledged to be a worthwhile activity. Groups like *The Temple ov Psychick Youth* promote it as a means of ridding ourselves of social indoctrination and rediscovering our "true intuitive will". As far as most taboos are concerned, this is fine, since most taboo actions are not in fact anti-social. Taboos against violence are another matter, since they crystallise what even many taboo-breakers would consider to be useful principles. How far do you go in your search for your inner self? Can you justify behaving in a "bad" way because you feel it is necessary to explore both the dark and light sides of your personality? Are the results of such self-exploration so important as to outweigh the effects on others of that exploration?

Many of the earlier "industrial" artists explored these areas: Throbbing Gristle and Monte Cazazza are amongst the best examples. It's arguable that their exploration of the extreme went further than *Thee Grey Wolves* would ever go since as well as just flirting with the imagery, they privately experienced and publicly performed any number of sadistic and taboo activities, of which, Cozey Fanni Tutti's exposure in pornographic magazines is probably the best remembered. And they're far from the only ones.

Outwith the musical ghettos, artists like Rudolf Schwarzkogler have explored extreme areas in depth. Schwarzkogler, an Austrian, died in 1969 after a series of performances involving self-mutilation. His compatriot Hermann Nitsch is particularly well known for his 1970s projects, in which the public participated in cathartic rituals involving real animal sacrifice, attempting to communicate with instincts generally anaesthetised by Western social alienation.

Time after time those members of the experimental music underground with an interest in Charles Manson, Jim Jones, Hitler and the other popular icons of extreme evil, seem to justify their interest in such things with the simplistic and idiotic "it's what I like, so it must be all right", appealing to the anarchistic belief that everyone should be allowed to follow their innermost desires. When those desires lead them to express fascination with mass-murderers, I begin to wonder exactly where we can draw the line. Knowing your enemy is all very well, but the interests shown by people like Boyd Rice (*Non*) frequently seem to cross the border that separates morbid from obsessive and dangerous.

But it's not just a question of how you or I or the groups themselves react to fascist and violent allusions. How do others react upon coming into contact with these bands? Some people are attracted by the simple clarity of fascism expressed within the style of bands like *Front 242*, *Last Few Days* and many others. Fascist rhetoric attracts fascists - a simple equation. If you don't want to attract such people, then you shouldn't use their rallying imagery in your publicity. This implies that anyone who uses such imagery is happy to associate with fascists, and willing to be labelled as such. Clearly, they don't find this insulting, or presumably they would do something about it.

Others are repelled. If you have suffered the effects of racism at first hand, then you may find it hard to find any liberal sympathy for those supposed sophisticates who plaster their album sleeves in swastikas. You may say this is just the result of their inability to challenge and overcome their conditioned preconceptions. I agree. I also suspect that anyone saying this would be showing a complete inability to understand exactly what it is that has produced this conditioning in the first place. If I had learned to associate the carving of **NF** on my door with the pushing of burning rags through my letterbox, I don't think I'd have much time for anyone asking me to challenge my preconceptions when presented with a pseudo-Nazi record cover.

It is perhaps reasonable to claim that it is desirable for the audience to reach their own conclusions about the information a band presents, rather than having the band's "right on" opinions shoved down their throats. Nobody likes to be preached at after all, and the mutual back-slapping that is the essence of a socialist band playing to a socialist audience is never going to provoke any thought in either party, only reinforce their prejudices. But should bands be so afraid of expressing their own opinions that they have to shelter behind the expression of supposedly "objective" information instead? I'm happy to accept a bit of subjectivity from the group's I listen to. If I want pure facts I'll go to a library. This particular problem is acute for *Thee Grey Wolves*, who do try to present their material as simple documentation. Their own opinions are rarely expressed, as they feel it is better to let the information speak for itself without any distorting subjective coloration.

Nonetheless, even *Thee Wolves* have been forced to declare themselves opponents of fascism, as it has become clear to them that if they do not make their

position clear then their audience **will** err on the side of caution, and stay away. This means that, like *Laibach* with their irony, they have had to temper their deliberately confusionist stance with a certain disclaimer, and as a result what they present can never again be so challenging. If we know that they are not really fascists, then the ambiguity of their presentation is removed - we know that they disapprove of what they are releasing, and we know how we are "expected" to react. The necessities of real life prevent them from adopting the absolute statement that they seem to desire to make.

Confusion as a revolutionary tool has a long history. Within the present century it has been well documented, from the *dada* art movement (and others) onwards to *fluxus* and beyond. In Zurich and Berlin, the Dada movement hurled abuse at its audience, shot on the art of the past, and gleefully espoused every paradox it could find. While Kennedy and Khrushchev faced off in 1962, flux-artist Robin Page turned what seemed like a rock gig into a potent experience when he kicked his guitar out of the building and down the street, the bewildered audience following close behind. Never let the audience **know** what is going on, since that way lies certainty, safety, and the end of anything challenging. This motto has served large numbers of artists well in the past, and, applied particularly to controversial and ambiguous politics, it creates a vigorous and interesting result.

If people are sure of what you are saying, then it can be argued that they will accept it at face value without thinking very deeply about it. If your statement is not clear cut, then they have to decide what they think it means, and this immediately forces them to give it deeper consideration. In other words, confusionism is a tool for provoking thought. In this arena, *Thee Grey Wolves* succeed, despite the seeming lack of originality of their subject matter. Unlike the various industrial bands who have dabbled in extreme areas, (with the possible exception of *Whitehouse*), *Thee Wolves* make it the sole focus of their art, and in doing so focus on **all** the questions which surround the area.

It is also fair to say that extreme situations **demand** extreme responses. And surely anyone who still believes that we do not live in an extreme situation has had their eyes and ears tightly shut for most of their life. Increasingly complex **formal** social organisation has created an environment where the stresses and strains of everyday life that would be easily dissipated by a more flexible and responsive political system are routed into **artificial** outlets. These stresses accumulate in the gaps between the hierarchical lines of communication, unable to be dealt with by a fixed system that cannot adapt quickly enough to new problems. As a result, the cracks begin to show more and more often, as our entire social structure suffers a nasty form of stress fatigue. The problems are there, as everyone knows, and as everyone knows the problems are not being dealt with, but wallpapered over in the hope that some future generation will have the ability to deal with them.

But extreme responses do not necessarily mean an extremely violent or nihilistic response. There are other forms of extremity. If our **only** desire is to draw people's attention away from the television set back to reality, to expose the civilised world as a sham, then nihilism is a good way of going about things. In the dark form favoured by many industrial artists, it represents an expression of discontent that cannot be easily repackaged and resold by the establishment, as punk was, for example.

However, it's debatable whether it achieves anything else. Negative criticism is never enough on its own. Many of the groups frequently lumped in under the "industrial" banner appear to have recognised this to some extent. *Test Dept*, whose original performances and records were brutal expressions of anger, have softened their work as they have

progressed, attempting to put out a more mature statement of their position. On their album, *Terra Firma*, they adopted a "green" awareness, but in general they have remained most comfortable as critics of oppression rather than attempting to offer solutions to it. To a great extent, this is a fear of becoming didactic, of telling the audience how they are expected to respond instead of leaving them to make up their own minds. Equally, it's because the group **have** no real political programme to offer, only a rather simplistic form of socialist consciousness.

Similarly, *Nocturnal Emissions* have moved away from the tactics of information overload, and from their aggressively presented reaction to their world, adopting in the last few years a more atmospheric musical style. Having decided that there is no future in just shouting against injustice, NE have tried to explore a more personal field, using instinct and the unconscious as their route to a more positive philosophy and a less reactive source of strength.

So clearly, there are problems with trying to create a more positive response to post-industrial society, with everyone who has rejected the extreme approach shying clear of preaching their personal solution. Maybe they just don't have the courage of their own convictions, and so are afraid to lay them on the table, open to criticism. Or maybe they appreciate that there is little point moving into a situation where both performer and audience explicitly share the same opinions, becoming trapped within their mutually reinforcing ideology.

But can replicating fascist ideology ever lead to its destruction? Are the supposed liberals only doing the Nazis' dirty work by creating a climate where the expression of fascist desires is deemed somehow made acceptable? Doesn't violence only breed violence?

Many, including the *Grey Wolves* argue that violence is the only solution we have left to face up against the Godzilla state. Anyone who believes that a rebellion in this country wouldn't be met by the armed response familiar from Tianamen Square, Jerusalem, Kurdistan and elsewhere is living in a fantasy. Riots in Philadelphia, USA, led to the military being called in to "restore order", with tanks on the streets to keep the populace submissive. The only difference between that and China is a linguistic one: we call it "rioting" if it happens here, and "rebellion" if it happens anywhere else; "terrorism" if it happens here, and "guerilla warfare" elsewhere. Investigations into the P2 masonic conspiracy in Italy uncovered links with the Italian extreme right-wing Gladio organisation, in turn linked to paramilitary forces in Britain which train regularly to ensure readiness for any "communist" takeover. The world we live in is a far more violent and oppressive place than the dailies would have us believe, and the argument that such a state can only be fought by using its own tactics is a powerful one.

Violence is inevitably authoritarian and repressive: it is the forceable destruction of another person's freedom, even if only their freedom not to suffer pain. The question is not whether use of violent imagery is "good". It is not. It is a question of whether or not the ends desired justify the use of such means. And still there is the unspoken assumption that there is no alternative: we can only destroy the state by taking on its mantle. Is this the only choice we are left with or are there other alternatives?

Comment on any of the above is very welcome. I think it's only fair to finish with a response from Crystal Knight to a letter I sent:

"In your letter you seemed to suggest that the Grey Wolves hold a basically nihilistic outlook on life - this is not the case at all. Whilst basically our approach is anarchic we deal in the ambiguity that you spoke of for several reasons: if anything we do makes just one person think "What the fuck is the point in them doing that?" it has all been worthwhile, because it has made people question. If people are questioning then they are alive and thinking. Confusion is the key issue. It was recently pointed out to me in an indirect way that the majority of our work deals with the subject of control.

"If I could use the example of control and how we use ambiguity in a positive way, it may make things a little clearer. There is a poster we did showing some bloke being arrested by plain clothes cops - his arms behind his back, face shoved to the ground, cops with pistols drawn - the caption over this picture reads "Say No to Democracy". Anyway, the point is that some people thought we were advocating a totalitarian state whilst other people thought we were being ironic in as much as we were trying to say "Look, this is what democracy is really about!" Either perspective we are quite happy to live with, as the objective of the poster was to make people think about democracy, even if it was only for a few seconds ...

"I would disagree with you though when you say that violence perpetuates the structures of oppression. I believe the exact opposite to be true (i.e. violence is a legitimate weapon of change). I would quote the Strangeways uprising here in Salford last April, and the recent prison reforms as an example of where violence has resulted in change for the better (also the poll tax riot, and on a larger scale the Gulf War)."

Very Selective Bibliography:

Fractured #2: "Panorama", excellent article on *Laibach* by Norman Jope.

Vital #14: Interview with *Con-Dom*.

Tape Delay: very wonderful book published by SAF and edited by Charles Neal. Interviews with bands like *Throbbing Gristle*, *Cabaret Voltaire*, *Test Dept*, *Laibach*, *Non*.

Re/Search: Various books including the *Industrial Culture Handbook*, with material on Monte Cazazza, SPK, *Throbbing Gristle* and others; *Burroughs / Gysin / Gristle*, featuring an interesting bio of T.G. by Simon Dwyer; and *Pranks*, which amongst other things documents a number of very extreme performance artists.

Performance Art: by RoseLee Goldberg, published by Thames and Hudson. Some material on Fluxus, Dada and Viennese 'actionism'.

Lipstick Traces: by Greil Marcus, published by Secker and Warburg. Shock tactics as used by the Lettrist International and by punk.

Thee Grey Wolves can be contacted at: Artaman Tapes, 62 Saxby Street, Salford, Manchester M6 7RG, England.

The Cultural Terrorist Manifesto

A terrorist who hijacks an airplane or plants a bomb in a crowded shopping centre apparently doesn't care who gets hurt as long as he (sic) achieves his aim. That innocent people are turned into bloody corpses or maimed for life is not his concern. The cultural terrorist is no different. The cultural terrorist, an assassin of the future, an executioner of morality. Cultural terrorism, an attitude, a state of mind - not a set of values to be dogmatically followed. Cultural terrorism is a celebration of the power of the individual.

Our aim is to pollute the minds of the public, to sow the seeds of insanity into society. Our victims are of all ages - everybody from the cradle to the grave. Man cannot bear too much reality and as a result of this the cultural terrorist is in the business of providing a reality attack. An over exposure of reality - the dirt behind the day dream. No subject is taboo, all must be exposed. No one is sacred. Everybody as well as everything should feel the wrath of the cultural terrorist. The object of cultural terrorism is to exploit situations and people in order to cause a reaction, preferably negative. Our aim is to make money in order to finance our war which we wage upon society. The money is required so that we can purchase the technology which will tear into the heart of all that is considered normal. We are the cancerous cell that would painfully destroy all that is in contact with it. We are working to erase the conforming instinct. To prevent humanity from ever acting with a common will.

The cultural terrorist's weapons are anything that enables him to inflict his views upon others or make him money. Be it film, video, audio cassettes, music, photocopiers, printed words, pictures - any media whatsoever is acceptable as long as it achieves the objective. We are little concerned how violent, how perverted, how degenerate, how much our material appeals to the very lowest of emotions, or how much the material twists and pollutes fresh young minds and further warps those already in trouble. If it makes money it will eventually achieve our aim and we will use it. We believe nothing is impossible, there is no god, there is no morality so we manipulate our environment to its fullest extent. Plagiarism is not only acceptable it is welcomed with open arms. We believe that you should not be afraid to steal

from anyone. Our way is that of the liar and deceptor. We also know that the bigger the lie the better the chance of people believing it. Under cover communication is enemy crime not politics.

Elaborate safeguards may be placed at airports to separate would-be terrorists from their weapons. But we the cultural terrorists are free to distribute our soul destroying weapons to whom and where we choose. The cultural terrorist is both benevolent and evil. Pull the wool over your own eyes in a call to arms. We feel very strongly that an active role of participation should be taken in this struggle by people already interested in this form of warfare. The cultural terrorist is involved in an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhuman world. Cultural terrorism is alien to this society and our technology will tear into it to open up wounds that may never again heal. Tomorrow belongs to us. **Confusion as a weapon / Confusion the key word.**

Healthy confusion, some call it "evil". Confusion that sparks the need to question. Confusion calling fear, the adrenalin to flow, the blood rush and the life force to sit up and take notice. Confusion making us question everything in search of some (un)sense. Everything to be probed into. Indulging into whatever subjects we feel like. Making our lives that much more interesting for ourselves. No subject should be taboo. Spewing it out in our writings, in our "artwork", in our aural pieces. Digesting and regurgitating, sometimes in almost original form and other times in unrecognisable confusion. Leading to questions from others, not sure of where we stand, their need to know, pretending not to care, yet seeking the safety of answers that fit their way, the safe way of thinking. We stand everywhere and nowhere. We wade in cool rivers / we tread in dogshit. Creating only for ourselves. Taking anything from our surroundings we desire or find necessary ... Alternative media ... Mindfuck to oblivion ... A disjointed, chaotic view of this fucked up, ever decaying globe. Gladly we take our part in the information / disinformation war in a fearless way. Ours is a wide open mouth sucking dead-life media cock. Ours is a wide open asshole shitting out dead-life media junk food. This here is the stink and defiance of a blanket protest. A big fuckoff to "peer group pressure". No attempt is made to conform, to speak your / their words. Always the fight against those who would control our minds and our bodies. In this our weapons are our very lives.

Nocturnal EMISSIONS

Newcastle is one of those surprising places, which no matter how isolated it may seem from the rest of the musical underworld, still manages to nurture an impressive roster of innovative and alternative musical activity. The city is known in the "post-industrial" music scene for three groups: *The Hafler Trio*, *Nocturnal Emissions*, and *Soviet France*, all of whom currently reside here. The Hafler Trio was for a time a collaboration between Chris Watson, previously of Cabaret Voltaire, and Andrew McKenzie, although it's now the latter's solo project. Like the other two groups, the Trio have experimented extensively with sound collage, with the creation of otherworldly soundscapes.

All the group share an interest in sounds evocative of spiritual, subconscious responses. Both Nocturnal Emissions and Soviet France have their origins at the end of the seventies, with the dawn of the "industrial" music scene and the chaos of punk still a prominent musical fireball in the background. Both have survived the decade by going deeper into their original interests and exploring new ones, and they are among

the few survivors from the early eighties to have built up a large reputation. They also appear to have a long future ahead of them ...

Nocturnal Emissions has always been mainly the project of Nigel Ayers, with collaborative help from various others throughout its history. Formed at the end of the seventies, at a time when numerous experimental groups were appearing, NE combined found sounds with a variety of instrumental ideas to create a noisy, chaotic, messy sound. It drew on the "sounds" of mass media technology, and distorted what it found to create the feeling of apocalyptic collapse lurking not far beneath the surface.

I tracked NE down in a pub in Newcastle ...

Nigel Ayers: "I came from quite an arty background. I was an art student studying sculpture before I started doing anything musical, and I found great difficulty in organising exhibitions, or any sort of outlet for the work I was doing. I was always interested in media-based work, like conceptual art ... the idea of putting out multiple packages of an idea, or a concept, as an artwork, rather than a one off museum piece to be wondered at. That's what I was interested in and that naturally led me into working in music at the tail end of punk rock. At a time when the means of distribution was actually quite easy for somebody who could raise the money to put out a record. The context existed to do that, so that you didn't just do it and have a hundred copies sitting on your shelf."

The ideas for NE differed a bit from the punk activity that inspired Nigel to start making music, however.

"I think it was something that I had to do, really. I just felt the need to do it, because although there was this 'new wave' explosion

of music, I don't think that anybody was thoroughly using or exploiting the medium. There were very few records which I found that I could relate to entirely. There might be a bit of an idea here or there, but I just felt there was a real vacuum.

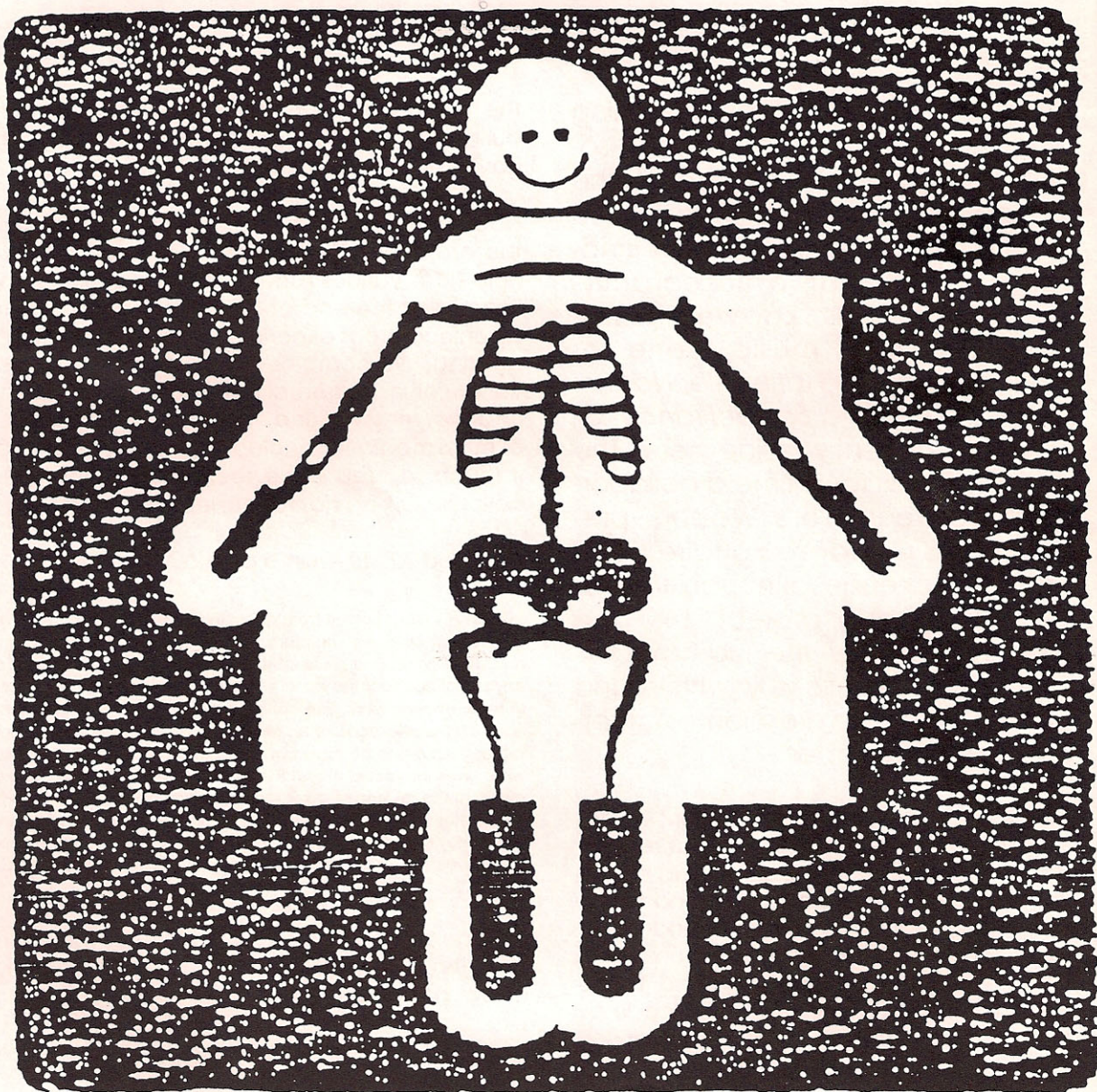
"Plus, technological advances were happening at the time, and I think musicians were still doing the same three-chord thrash. Why were they doing all this nonsense when this cheap electronic technology exists, which there seemed to be so much potential for? Obviously, what has occurred in the ten to twelve years since then, is this whole classicism of electronic-based dance music using one or two very simple sounds over and over again. It's like a rehash of a pattern book.

"I thought it was the best thing to do, because I was approaching what I was doing completely fresh. I really didn't want to learn to play chords and scales. I thought, a new technology exists, I've got ideas and ways of doing it, I think it's best for me to move into a medium where I've got a completely clean slate, I can actually learn to work out my own way of doing it."

Although he felt less and less interested in the art world, he felt that there was insufficient interest in the type of music he wanted to do to enable him, initially, to follow the live performance route of most bands.

"I couldn't be bothered organising any art exhibitions, because I basically didn't like the people I had to deal with. Just the ideas and the assumptions that were circulating around art of any sort, I found completely alien to my method of working and the way I conceived ideas. I just found it so easy to move into doing music, especially recorded music, because absolutely no facility existed for doing live performances, and there was absolutely zero interest. I don't think there ever has been any real interest in avant-garde music in Britain. I think it's a wasteland, and that's from ten to fifteen years of being interested or directly involved in it. That's been my experience all along."

Most of NE's releases were released on their own Sterile Records label, from 1981 to 1985, with others appearing on Illuminated and Flow-motion during this period. Before creating



Sterile, and before *NE's* first record release, *Tissue of Lies*, on Emiss Records (recently revised and rereleased on CD), Nigel Ayers released "about half a dozen cassettes, selling about ten or twenty copies each. We used to send them to people, and send them out as finished products rather than as demos. I've never had any interest whatsoever in demos."

Running Sterile Records "always took up loads of time ... I always used to spend every day answering letters and making phone calls." Meanwhile Nigel Ayers also survived on temping jobs, office work, cleaning and the like. "Just part time jobs that I didn't need to commit too much time too."

From the beginning, *Nocturnal Emissions* had little in the way of ambition. "I just felt this need to do it, and did it. I never saw it as a career, I never saw it really lasting this long. In fact it's not a career, it's like I've been beating my head against a brick wall for most of the time. It's an anti-career really. Over the years it's cost me a great degree of material discomfort, and it's been a great deal of hard work ... I think I'm still doing it because I'm still finding that there's things that I need to do."

Although Nigel Ayers would never pretend that *Nocturnal Emissions* was the result of his effort alone, he acknowledges that, as his baby, he has come to dominate it more and more as time has passed.

"In the early days it was very much a collaborative thing, in terms of how the product was produced. In the last two or three years I've become a lot more bloody-minded and I tend to give people orders as to what they're going to do now. They have to fit within my scheme of things! (laughs)"

Collaboration?

"I think things become a lot more open to interpretation, and a lot more confused along the way. I think a greater degree of ambiguity can come out of collaborations. My first and last aim was to produce a product or a show which satisfied a few criteria that I had for it. I'll always use input from whoever I'm working with, but I tend to take editorial control, to a greater extent than I used to. I take personal responsibility for everything now."

The audience?

Despite his earlier dislike for the logic of the art world, Nigel Ayers current way of working shares many of that world's assumptions. The records, tapes, CDs and videos produced by *Nocturnal Emissions* are all consumer products. All are attempts to sell creativity, in the same way an art exhibition

does, and like those exhibitions, sell it only to the elite few who have access to it. Nigel's dislike of the art world belies a lack of awareness of what he is still involved in ...

"Approaching the world of music, you can see that there is a very, very definite commercial mainstream. In the world of art there's a very, very definite mainstream there, but the commercial element seems to be tied up with the avant-garde as well. So, the avant-garde to a large extent serves the interests of, say, a privileged elite, which also happens to be, let us say, the 'captains of industry'. I felt like moving into music rather than into straight-forward visual art, I felt this was getting round that ... The punters, who are the 'patrons' of this work, I think they come from a wider cross-section and 'class' background than the people for whom 90% of avant-garde visual art is produced."

Nocturnal Emissions, like many others involved in the experimental scene, has acquired a liking for producing expensive, limited edition releases, aimed at the collector's market, and clearly inaccessible to many who would like to hear the music. Their 1990 album, *Beyond Logic, Beyond Belief*, came in an edition of 250 copies, at £26 each, and the most recent record, *Mouth of Babies*, based on recordings of babies' voices, sells for the same price. There seems to be little desire to make their work as widely available as possible, or to ensure that all their current audience has access to it.

"To be fair to the pricing policy, we do actually put out fairly cheap CDs, and we've always put out cheap vinyl. Recently a collectors' market has developed surrounding lots of groups that were active in the early eighties. A few groups that were active then, ourselves included, records that we put out for say a pound or two pounds are now changing hands for fifty, sixty, two hundred pounds. I'm thinking, well, if this collector's market exists, it should be encouraged to support ongoing projects, rather than things that to me don't have any relevance now, that old stuff and what it was dealing with ... the idea is to serve the project ultimately."

The coffee-table set

NE's music of the early eighties jumbled up a variety of cultural influences, producing a loud, chaotic and sometimes unpleasant listening experience. The seeds of future work were also present, with an interest in the rhythms and instrumentation of other cultures in evidence on some tracks.

Nigel Ayers: "I was trying to throw open what could happen within music. The western tradition is very narrow, it's based on a seven note scale, which is more or less arbitrary in how it has been chosen. There are a huge number of possible scales which any possible music could be based on. I just wanted to draw in elements from a cross-section of other traditions, as well as use the electronic technology, which is precisely the same as Paul Simon's doing now."

Paul Simon's latest album, *Rhythm of the Saints*, has been playing in the background for a few minutes. It blends western production tech-

niques and melodic elements with mostly African rhythms and instrumentation, producing atmospheric, instrumental music for the coffee-table set. Like Nocturnal Emissions for the mass-market perhaps ...

"The Paul Simon approach is more like a colonisation, whereas I think our approach is more of a bastardisation and a mixing of blood.

"We used to use quite a lot of film projections and slide projections, so that there'd be a barrage of imagery going on at the same time as a barrage of sound. It was very much a sensory overload. At the moment, the tactic is more like sensory deprivation."

From 1987 onwards the music turned in a new direction. In 1987, they recreated their identity with a new label, Earthly Delights, and launched a series of albums (see discography below) exploring a more organic, less immediately noisy sound.

"I think the time had come to close down Sterile Records because of the associations that were tied up with it. The involvement with the early 1980s post-industrialism. I think the label had acquired an image which I wanted to break with as radically as I could. I thought a better way to do that was to just start a new label, or just change the name and start the catalogue numbers from one! ... The music was going in a new direction anyway, and this helped make it clear that there was a clear change in emphasis ... I think our work gets evaluated in different terms now. I don't think we're seen purely as a noise-making group."

Incorporating found sounds, environmental recordings and atmospheric instrumental music, this change signified a desire to make music drawing on positive, personal feelings, as opposed to the negative, reactive sound that characterised earlier releases. Nigel admits: "I think I'm still pretty stropic, it just might not be reflected in the music so much!"

Old age?

"I think it's just a change of emphasis! ... I think, before there was a large element of reaction, and indeed anger at the mainstream, whereas now I believe that the reaction and anger has served its purpose, and indeed that the reaction and anger in itself has become so ritualised that I think it just loses any meaning."

Nigel Ayers speaks of Nocturnal Emissions' work as a conscious attempt to create a new form of music, appropriate and functional. Although he doesn't admit to feeling a part of any musical tradition, he acknowledges a variety of influences.

"Obviously I'm aware of the other music that's going on, but to create something new you have to put down your own ground rules, and work out your own way of doing it. So if there is any strong influence, then I think you're duty bound to break away from that, and to pursue your own course. Obviously there's a recent tradition of so-called minimal

music, which was to a large extent an appropriation of a variety of traditional musics, ritual and trance music. Myself, I can see great value in lots of so-called spiritual music, or music that has been used in a religious context, such as buddhist chants, Gregorian chants, ritual music from Tibet, voodoo music, traditional aboriginal music. There's a richness and there's a strong tradition there that seems to work within a framework of a certain set of beliefs, which to me are outmoded and disproven in an age of science.

"I'm sceptical of most claims of the power of music. With, say, music therapy, or a lot of New Age music, there's a body of opinion and marketing which goes with it which says that this music brings about a relaxing effect which is necessarily good for you, and it's been worked out in such and such a way by Professor Stephen Halpern. I think it's just a way of dressing up third rate music which I find unnecessarily twiddly and decorative."

To many people, Nocturnal Emissions' current atmospheric music might not sound too different from the New Age he criticises. It's instrumental music designed to trigger moods and associations in the listener without necessarily dictating what those moods are to be.

"I do believe that music has a psychological impact on you, and that to a large extent comes from its meaning for you, and the associations tied up with it. Any piece of music that I've ever produced is brought about by a background of personal associations, most of which I probably share in common with most of the people living in today's global village. It's not a distraction - it can be a background music or it can be something that you're involved in."

The energy exchange

I asked Nigel how he finds inspiration for new projects, what starts off a new album. He finds it hard to explain:

"It's usually to do with whatever's going on in my life, the largest influences that are going on at the time. For example, the *Mouth of Babes* record came about because several people that I knew were all having babies around the same time. This meant I was hearing a lot of babies' voices all of a sudden. Thinking, (a) this would be a good idea for a record, and (b) looking into the ideas of what exactly is music, and what makes a musician. Do you have to be six or seven years old like Mozart was, before you can make relevant music?"

"Every product that we've done has got a conceptual basis. That one was probably one of the simplest and easiest ideas to get across, so I refer back to that. For example, *Beyond Logic*, *Beyond Belief*, there's greater subtleties in the idea itself. Which I probably couldn't be bothered explaining ..."

To quote his explanation from Earthly Delights' Network News #1, "What's important in this culture we're now cultivating is we can gain an understanding of the world which speaks to us directly without the filters of belief, which go within a spirit system without the filters of logic that go with a science system."

The basic methods of creating the music are perhaps easier to describe:

"I go out and about with recording equipment. Over the years I've built up a library of source material, location recordings, wildlife recordings. Plus quite a large library of music made with a diversity of instruments, different types of sounds. That's something which I'm constantly adding to and drawing from."

What did they do for their recent performances in the United States?

"Playing keyboards. I didn't do anything particularly visual at all. We did some shows with Poppo and the Go-Go Boys, which was primarily a dance performance, which we played live for about half of, and the other half was taped. The other shows were pretty straightforward. Visually there wasn't a lot to look at, which was completely and utterly intentional. We've always had the intention that people don't look at us, they listen to what we're doing. What usually happens is that half the audience just sits down and closes their eyes.

"There's always an element of improvisation there. What we do, is we have a very tightly structured and timed format that we've got worked out, and we rehearse a lot. Then when you reach a particular venue, each place has different acoustical properties. The atmosphere at each place is usually very different. The type of crowd is different, the expectations of the crowd are very different, so the music we produce on any one given night is completely different. Although we have that framework, the way it's set up in a live performance, to put it in an esoteric way, it's an energy exchange between the performers and the public and the venue and the situation. We take all those factors into account when we're playing. This influences the actual level of volume, for example. Sometimes we deliberately play really quiet so that people have to really hush up or they don't hear us, and a large element of the performance actually becomes the background chit-chat. Sometimes we also play at really high volume levels, at the pain level."

The decision to play the series of concerts in the U.S. was part of a general desire to become more accessible and better known, ambitions for Nocturnal Emissions beginning to stir ...

"I'd like to see Nocturnal Emissions become more of a big name and to actually start having a bit more influence through what we're doing, without having to get over a didactic idea,

or a stance, like 'where do we stand as regards the poll tax' or animal rights or anything like that. But in terms of a whole attitude, in terms of not just creating music. Working in the context that we do, you also have to create a lifestyle around your music, which goes hand in hand with running a record label. The mail-order business is run completely and utterly as a crusade, it's not run like a record shop, where I would ever choose something because it was requested by a customer or out of market research. The mail-order company is completely and utterly a statement of what we have on offer. It's a statement of an attitude, which people can either take or leave, but it's something which exists ... I think we need to put ourselves out a lot more, just to become more physically accessible. So it means going out and doing live performances, anywhere and everywhere."

Viral shedding

As the explanation of *Beyond Logic, Beyond Belief* given above might indicate, Nocturnal Emissions have never been afraid to face accusations of being pretentious or pseudo-intellectual (accusations often flung at fellow-Newcastle resident Andrew McKenzie of the Hafler Trio). From the cassette release of *Drowning in a Sea of Bliss*, on Touch, comes the following inlay card:



"Our video-clipped wings are sprouting new feathers, rising up against your film-propped-up phoney baloney corpse in choking mouth smoked out existence. We roar like thunder. We chuckle as you peer through your lace-curtained tracking TV circuit's action replay cameras. You can't monitor us - we have nothing that fits your schedule. Liars to your ratings, we are here in this mess you made, shedding like a virus. Your germ-war against us has produced mutants you can't control, and like chestnut buds we learnt from our mistakes and won't be repeating them. Strengthening we steal back now, reclaiming our ancestral memories, for their fossils fuel our 'molotovs'. Here's a little cocktail we've brewed up."

Depending on your point of view you could take this either as deliciously self-parodying poetry, or just as plain pretentious. Why is the information Nocturnal Emissions put out phrased in such an obscure and esoteric way?

"It seemed the most appropriate way of describing the product. We could use, plain English to describe the product, but I think you're probably missing an opportunity. Another way of using the media. We're just using that opportunity to produce scripts which are to do with the ideas which are in the products, and probably convey some of the effects."

Their more recent material, according to Nigel, is intended to form a lasting body of work, although this was not the case with their earlier releases. I have my doubts about this - if Nocturnal Emissions really feel their work deserves to be heard again in twenty years time then they would be doing more to release it in a suitable form, rather than in one-off limited editions, for a start. Nigel is also ambivalent about reissuing old material.

"We've had some offers to reissue just about all our back catalogue on CD, and we've turned them all down. The new version of *Tissue of Lies*, that sets out to make the CD possibly inferior to the original, in certain ways. We did it, in a way, just to point out the contradictions that were going on ... I think if we came up with a relevant way of presenting it, then we'd do it. But having said that, we've turned down four or five offers to reissue our back catalogue on CD."

Part of Nocturnal Emissions' enthusiasm for improving the accessibility of their music is a desire to encourage networking. To this end, Network News came into being in 1990 as a regular magazine devoted to their work, and to the work of others they are interested in.

"I think that for an individual to develop and to acquire confidence in themselves, they need to get in contact with some sort of context to develop their potential. A context of, say a university, is quite an elitist and quite a difficult way of doing that. An alternative exists in information networks, like computer networks or postal networks, for actually exchanging ideas, and just encouraging personal growth. It's a hackneyed term, really. But I don't mean personal growth in people who are brainwashed, always smiling, fucking moonies or whatever.

"The systems don't exist to actually discuss the material we're doing intelligently anyway. I can't see any sort of context developing within any mainstream publication. You have to do it for yourself. You can't do it on a local level, because the level of interest locally isn't that much."

As ever, the real communities are those tied together by shared interests rather than geographical proximity. Networking is the only way of getting a community of interest in contact with itself, and providing opportunities for information exchange which don't involve any hierarchy. Network News grew out of a more pragmatic and less idealistic need however:

"The reason I started it was that individual replies to requests for information were taking too long to do. It's a way of presenting the information, giving some personal details about what's going on, presenting some of the background, and putting what we're doing into some sort of a context which people can pick up. Just get deeper into, I suppose."

Plans for the future?

Nocturnal Emissions have a back catalogue of several videos, all rarely seen by their audience. "We have been talking to a film company in Newcastle, about getting something on TV. I don't have the time or the energy to put into video production."

Also in the pipeline are more live events. Following the American tour, with Jonathan Whitfield and Anthea Milne making up the Nocturnal Emissions numbers, they played a series of five dates in the Netherlands. *Mouth of Babes* is coming out in CD, a totally different remix to the LP package, with additional material. Future live events are likely both with Nocturnal Emissions, and in collaboration with dance performer Poppo. A live LP due out soon, *Energy Exchange*, documents recent performances, including a collaboration with Zoviet France. Finally, the next album, due this summer, will be *Cathedral*.

Discography Post-1986

The World is my Womb (Earthly Delights, 1987; Soleilmoon cassette, 1989)

Spirittflesh (Earthly Delights, 1988; Soleilmoon cassette, 1989)

Stoneface (Parade Amoureuse, 1989)

Invocation of the Beast Gods (Staalplaat, 1990)

Beyond Logic, Beyond Belief (Earthly Delights 1990)

The Mouth of Babes (Earthly Delights, 1991)

All reviews tend to list only the format the recording was reviewed on. Other formats may be available! Availability is from "all good record shops" unless otherwise listed. Addresses are all UK except where indicated. If you have difficulty finding something, get in touch, and I'll try and recommend a source. Lots of these are sufficiently old that they shouldn't really have been left in, but who cares? Please note that only up-to-date material will be reviewed in future issues, although reissues of old music might also be considered for inclusion.

AAAK

Big Fist CD (KK Records KK 056)

As Able As Kane return with their first full length album, following on from the 1989 classic *Buildingscapebeat* on Scam Records (well worth seeking out). The sound here is more song-oriented, more commercial, and less inclined to run off into long rhythm drives for the sake of doing so, but it still retains the heavy rhythms that made their first release so enjoyable. Best tracks amongst some pretty fine electrobeat here include the vibrant and unstoppable *Two Watching*, the thunderous *Concrete* and *Crash*, upbeat and energetic. Some of the tracks are less successful, either due to attempts to sing properly (never a good idea) as on *Train to the West*, or just a general lack of togetherness, or an attempt to be too grandiose. It lacks the ferocious vigour of *Buildingscapebeat*, but remains a highly enjoyable hardbeat album.

A Gethsemani

Ottoman Violine cassette only (Mind Scan)

Mad French people (makes a change from mad Slavs or Italians, I suppose), mixing a whole load of instruments, mostly real winds, percussion, strings and synths, to create a blend of folk, rock and more experimental material. Amateurish in construction and professional in execution, if you understand what I mean. And also surprisingly refreshing, thanks to its willingness to mix the orthodox with the outre, and thanks to A Gethsemani's surefooted sense of rhythm, harmony and melody. Atmospheric, imaginative, peculiar,

and highly recommended. Most unusually for Mind Scan, who usually do very scrappy photocopied inserts for their tapes, it even comes with a quite attractive printed inlay card. Whatever next? Unlikely to satisfy pure experimental noise fans, incidentally, especially when it occasionally reverts to quaint sub-Residents rock roots. [Available from Mind Scan, or contact A Gethsemani, 18 Rue du Dr Meugy, 08300 Rethel, France]

Abortive Gasp

Spoiled Teeth and a Dozen of Pre-varications cassette only (Remix Recordings RR10)

Abortive Gasp's music here combines some highly distorted vocals, regular rock drumming, hardcore guitar power and crazy synthesiser rambling. It varies from decidedly individual punk rock to a sort of Kraftwerk put through a mincing machine. Anarchic, electric, and very American. Some of it's a bit too deliberately chaotic to make easy listening, some of it is a very enticing blend of rhythmic electronics and wailing guitar voltage, and occasionally it's just a very attractive, very carefully formed little texture. Very far-off beam rock music essentially, with its bizarre electronics and chaotic structures. Mostly too unfocused for me (although it certainly has its moments) but you may think otherwise. [Available from Remix Recordings, c/o Tim Pahl, Birkenweg 12, W-2000 Wedel, Germany]

Anorexia Remix

Freeway Mustang cassette only (Remix Recordings RR 008)

Electronic rock-cum-dance with lots of synthesizers, samples and chugging percussion. Amateurish and uncomplimentary vocals in English in a German accent accompany the first track, *Rodriguez Blue*, and the tape continues in pretty much the same vein, sometimes minus the vocals. The music is actually pretty good, and there's also a healthy and humorous disrespect both for the technology and for, um, songs in general. Not for those who only like polished, well put together music, I expect, although some of it is surprisingly professional. [Available from Remix Recordings, c/o Tim Pahl, Birkenweg 12, W-2000 Wedel, Germany]

Another Headache / dROME

Cacophony Concerto / Father 7" only (Work in Progress WIP 001)

Buzzing electric noise, subtle undulating tones, and found voices (an-

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other loony Xtian) behind them make up dROME's side of this limited edition single release. Marginally better than most such noisy stuff, thanks to the more subtly waving pitches present, good choice of vocals, and a reasonable sense of restraint. Another Headache create a track full of oscillating frequencies, strange ambient noises, and a nicely understated sense of atmosphere. But all the music seems derivative, having been done many times before, and a single is just too short a space to really let either band show their stuff. [Limited edition of 500, available for £3 UK or \$5 elsewhere, cash only, from Work in Progress, 210 Pitshanger Lane, Ealing, London W5 1QS; or contact Dave Bourgoin, 161 A Western Ave., Acton, London W3 6RN]

Antonym

Native Dystopean cassette only (Obsidian Tapes OBT02)

This cassette by Anthony Burnham mixes processed noise, found recordings, electronic rhythms and unidentifiable sounds to create a repetitive music which happily allows the abstract and the almost-real to journey alongside one another. Fragments of reality, in the form of voices and other recordings are collaged in with the distorted noise, and dragged along bodily by the cheap knocking and thumping mechanical rhythms. The texture created echoes the work of numerous other cassette-artists (I'm reminded of Big City Orchestra, for example), while remaining completely unlike most other music. Hints of a jazzy disco, terribly mutated, occasionally surface in the music's beat, and several short tracks offer a more subdued soundscape, characterised by low rumbling and droning. One, *Saint of Sorrow*, creates a very effective and beautiful feeling. Uncategorisable and intriguing. [Available from Obsidian Tapes, 70 Old Hinckley Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV10 0AB]

Attrition

Recollection 84-89 cassette/CD (Projekt PRO28)

For people who already know Attrition, I need only say that this is a compilation of sixteen tracks (at least on the cassette) from their long history, which is probably more Attrition than you could reasonably cope with at one sitting. For the rest of you, Coventry-based Attrition always resided at the edge of the electro-goth spectrum, making a music that was one part pop, one part goth, and one part inspired by electro/industrial pioneers. It's gloomy, dramatic, melodramatic, joyous, and highly individual stuff, with exotic and fey lyrics to match. Like much of the stranger pop this country has produced, for example, the Pink Dots or Bourbonese Qualk, Attrition were far more successful in Europe than here, and there certainly is a European sensibility in their music. Highlights in this compilation include *My Friend is Golden*, *Beast of Burden*, *A'dam & Eva* and *Mind Drop*. I must admit, I'm not a fan: I don't think their unique blend of influences produces anything really new out of the stew, despite its great character. A nice overview for newcomers, although it would have been nice to feature a few tracks from old compilations as well as the more readily available releases. [Available from Projekt, Box 1591, Garden Grove, CA 92642-1591, USA]

Autopsia

The Knife 12" only (Staalplaat SP 001)

Yes, there is more to Yugoslavia than Laibach and Borghesia, and this is another small part of it. Ominous growling bass male voice, soft mechanical rhythm, clanging metal, synth strings: the strange and atmos-

pheric *Does The Knife Cry When It Enters The Skin?* occupies one side, whilst on the other, *His Secret Sin* jerks around metal, plastic and electricity, creating a tacky and unconvincing rhythmic piece. Maybe worth it for the first side though. [Available from Staalplaat]

Birth of Tragedy

Death Survives cassette only (Mind Scan)

The titles give you some idea of where Birth of Tragedy are coming from: *Vatican Victims*, *Jonestown Overture* and *Fear Eats the Soul* join the title track. If that's not enough to put you off then what would be? This is 1991 and people still haven't stopped being obsessed with the same old icons of death! On the first track, electric harmonies generate a menacing atmosphere over slow drumming. *Overture* is introduced by much abused recordings of Jonestown, followed by dark rumbling, atonal solo violin (?) and other hints of noise lurking behind this facade, gradually bubbling to the surface. It slightly fails to live up to the potential that it undoubtedly has, the violin being used both imaginatively and crassly, detracting from the rest of the sound. The title track combines aggressive metal-beating with a background of contaminated sonic undertones, snatches of violin, while *Fear* uses oscillating sounds as a base for a patchwork of strange pluckings, scrapings and bangings. A very interesting tape, and certainly a band worth watching. [Available from Mind Scan]

Black Tape for a Blue Girl

A Chaos of Desire cassette (Projekt PRO30)

I'd like to avoid comparing them to the Cocteau Twins (or maybe This Mortal Coil), but, umm, it's simply not possible. *A Chaos of Desire* opens with sensuous, billowing textures, violin, guitar, electronics and wordless female vocals courtesy of Julianna Towns. The title track itself mixes Mortal Coil with Dead Can Dance. Swimming in a sea of memory, sun flickering through dark branches, heart filled with a mixture of pain and joy. You know the feeling? If you don't then you may still enjoy *Black Tape*: it's nicely understated, and full of that sad 4AD enchantment. At times a bit too gothic for my taste: I prefer my beauty tinged with a touch less angst. [Available from Projekt, P.O. Box 1591, Garden Grove, CA 92642-1591, USA]

Bourbonese Qualk

Bo'Qu LP (New International Recordings NIR 904)

This is a compilation of thirteen tracks from 1982-1990, recorded by one of many members of the music scene who have had a far better reception abroad than at home. For the most part it's distinctly exotic rock, with shuffling, alien rhythms and odd atmospherics. The opener, the previously unreleased *Petit Mal* is a slice of spectral beauty, wailing instrumental cries over the beat. Other highlights include the ominous *Glass Works*, the vibrant, pulsating *Under the Influence* (from the forthcoming *Unpop* LP), the processed clarinet and tight rhythm of *Lukunzi*, and the laid back and pretty *Always There*. A lot of the instrumentation sounds very dated now, and a few of the tracks are pretty tedious, but it remains fairly distinctive. There are a few echoes of the Cabs and people like Portion Control, but Bourbonese Qualk have their own definite character. Compared to many groups making "experimental" music, they're pretty middle-of-the-road, which I suspect accounts for their lack of fame in this part of the world - too strange for the indie fans, and too normal for the experimental fans. This compilation is, incidentally, considerably better than their last album, *My Government is my Soul*.

Cabaret Voltaire

Listen Up With Cabaret Voltaire double LP/CD (Mute CABS 5)

This is part of Mute's attempt to reissue Cabaret Voltaire's back catalogue, in much the same way as they are responsible for keeping Throbbing Gristle, Can, Diamanda Galas, and soon Dome and the Hafner Trio widely available. Notable omissions from their reissue schedule include all the material issued on Some Bizarre / Virgin and Les Disques du Crepuscule, lots of solo work (although some of that is supposed to be on its way) and their early 1974-1976 cassette. *Listen Up* brings together sixteen tracks, seven unreleased and nine of which appeared on various compilations. Here the material ranges from the abstract electronics and distorted vocals of *Baader Meinhof* to the perverse electro of *Don't Drive Fast*, echoing their *Code*-era style. Fans will know what to expect. For the rest of you: distorted, paranoid electronics evoking everything from Philip K. Dick to an electric Kenneth Anger. Synthetic rhythms, heavily processed guitars and brass, danceable but barely so. The Cabs are credited with inspiring everything from wide use of vocal sampling to the cut-up video. Their significance has become increasingly mythologised, and it's nice to see their music made widely available to help demolish the legend a little. It sounds the way it does partly because of a lack of ability, partly because of cheap and unpolished technology, and mostly because the Cabs always lived in a special little world of their own, quite apart from the musical mainstream. My favourites here include the atmospheric *Automotivation*, and more recent material like *Playing For Time* and *Don't Drive Fast*.

Cat Rapes Dog

The Banzai Beats mini-LP/CD (KK Records KK 064)

The Swedish electrobeat merchants fit six new tracks onto this 25-minute release, and apart from the competent electronic sequencers and synths, it's mostly distinguished by the interesting contrast between Joel Rydström's nicotine growl and Annelie Bertilsson's sweet voice on two tracks. The music is mostly a mildly poppy electrobeat, although hardly Top 40 material, reminding me of Skinny Puppy with more friendly technology. The best tracks are *Open Your Mind*, very reminiscent of Front Line Assembly, and *Me and My Remote Control*, boasting nicely humorous lyrics amongst the rapid electronic shimmer. Cat Rapes Dog are competent, but competent just isn't enough, really. We want genius!

Chemical Plant

Cassemtext cassette (Chainsaw Cassettes CSC 012)

Inspired by Philip K. Dick's novel *A Scanner Darkly*, this cassette's 13 tracks mix industrial noise, mechanical rhythms, distorted voices, and atmospheres reminiscent of, well, a chemical plant. The lyrics on *Surveillance* are awful, and the voice insufficiently processed to make it fit in well with the music, and this is true of all the tracks containing lyrics. Some of the music is quite ambient, though still unpleasant, and the atmosphere is paranoid, disturbing, limited mainly by a slightly amateurish feel. I've had enough of tracks based on that cassette / computer data noise for example! But there are some great tracks, notably *Genetic Fingerprinting's* police-state found voices plus industrial noise. [Available from Chainsaw Cassettes]

A Chud Convention

Sorrow mini-LP (Circle Records 003)

This is a bit old now but still well worth reviewing. A collaboration between Ogre and Key of Skinny Puppy, and Evets and Seuqcaj of á;Grumh, this is 25 minutes of tortured throat music: growling, coughing, hissing, laboured breathing, whispers and vocal samples all processed with a variety of effects and layered into an extremely atmospheric piece of abstract music. Intense, if occasionally quite ridiculous in its attempts to sound horrifying, it's a very enjoyable listening experience. The second side, *Silent Sorrow*, is a slower, more ambient, but if anything more ominous track. Wonderful stuff.

ClockDVA

Transitional Voices LP (Interfisch Records EFA 01718-08LP)

Live material from Bologna last year, *Transitional Voices* shows off more of ClockDVA's rippling electronic rhythms, hushed voices, and shimmering synthetic texture. Not especially impressive compared to the fun to be had with their last album *Buried Dreams*. Repetitive and lacking the polish that would help that repetition create a more trance-provoking music, although it certainly grows on you, improving as it goes on. Fans will like it; others should maybe try *Buried Dreams* first, which is a much smoother combination of pristine synthetic gloss, shamanistic ritual and diseased technophilia.

Coil

Love's Secret Domain LP (Torso Records 33181)

As unpredictable as ever! The dance influence is at times as prominent here as above, house rhythms and blippy keyboards being the order of the day. *Teenage Lightning* combines Latin rhythms with electronic voice; *Window-pane* has improved with further listening; Coil are clearly capable of creating a light, dreamy atmosphere but all the rawness and humanity that was present on earlier releases has gone in favour of this more trance-like, meditative feel. On the (significantly better) second side, *Further Back and Faster* has some dark electronics and distorted voice lurking in the background, but is dominated by a simple, tinny rhythm, and goes nowhere of any interest. *Titan Arch* is better, with shivering, screeching atmospherics, and Marc Almond's vocals creating a dangerous little mood. *Chaostrophy* is highly evocative, mixing fairly chaotic noise, ominous rumbling and emotive orchestration to good effect. The title track ends things off with some very strange rhythms, both drummed and synthesised, a swinging mood reminiscent of the first track, and a general feeling of a pop song gone completely off-beam. Coil appear to have found new musical interests, or new ways of exploring old interests. They're not stuck in a rut, but this album, although reasonably pleasant, remains a disappointment.

Consolidated

The Myth of Rock LP (Nettwerk W1-30045)

They've been described as a meeting between Front 242 and Public Enemy, and I'm not about to deny the obvious linkage. This is agitpop par excellence. Pulverising beats, superlative situationist and anti-capitalist rap, the spirit of an earthquake entrapped in humble vinyl. Whenever I listen to this revolution seem only a drumbeat away ... And there's enough of a sense of irony present so that their violent opposition to consumerism can survive even its packaging in record form ie. a consumer product. Excellent stuff! Despite trying a little too hard to be the white version of Public Enemy, they produce a powerful neo-situationist critique of the music industry, the role of the modern musician, and capitalism in general. Exhortations to their audience to stop

listening to this crap and get up and take control of their lives are a bit too preachy, but show their versatility of approach, and ability to present their message in different forms to suit a broad audience. And the beats are simply **immense**. You've bought this already, haven't you?

Consolidated

Friendly Fa\$ciism CD (Netwerk NET 033CD)

Consolidated's second album is a stranger affair. The rap music is still there, as is the seismic hardbeat. The critical analysis of the music industry is as potent as ever, and Consolidated appear to be increasingly aware of the contradictions inherent in their position. This is intense, knockout, **humorous** music. Amongst the samples and beats are recordings from Consolidated's live audience participation sessions, providing a large number of moronic comments. The political agenda is more distinct too, with a shift of emphasis towards the rights of women and the rights of animals, including *Meat Kills*, a recital on the righteousness of vegetarianism. The sharp contrast between their preaching and their self-aware humour couldn't be more clear. Their willingness to ally themselves with what I find to be the more idiotic excesses of radical feminism may put some people off. This is clearly a result of their environment: the issues they approach and the ways they approach them are very American. Meanwhile, the music is a bit more laid-back than before, with nothing quite as scorching as the first album's *Product*, for example. Nonetheless, Consolidated remain possibly the most important "rap" group in the world. Buy this record, mindless consumer!

Context

Changed Music 2 cassette only (Cold Spring CS 009)

Part of Cold Spring's reissue schedule, this tape somehow avoided being released first time round, so this is the first time it has been available. It is the 53rd release by Stefan Schwab as Context. Side one is a long ambient, droning work, various tones combining with each other to produce some interesting harmonics and a peculiar alien atmosphere. The development is subtle and minimal, and it's surprisingly effective given how little actually happens. The second side is similar. [Available from Cold Spring Records, 87 Gloucester Avenue, Delapre, Northampton, NN4 9PT]

Contrastate

"i" cassette only (Direction Music DMC17)

This is a thoroughly wonderful cassette from a band deserving much more fame than they currently possess. The first side, *I Just Am* is a hydrochloric cloud of atmosphere, ambient yet corrosive. Abstract and strange, it mixes slowly developing swathes of sound very well. Rumbles and birdchat add to the menacing feeling, and we're left with a very beautiful piece of music. The second side has slightly less to recommend it, starting with a recital over low gong tones, continuing with a piece for the multi-tracked voice of Mark Hamilton, which despite a slightly child-like and out-of-tune feel gets surprisingly impressive as it develops, with some obvious similarities to the work of Meredith Monk. Finally, the tape ends with another atmospheric instrumental, winds, jungle sounds, and slow shades of tone filtering through. Excellent stuff. [Available from Direction Music, 28 Nant-y-Felin, Pentraeth, Anglesey, Gwynedd LL75 8UY]

Controlled Bleeding

Gag LP (Materiali Sonori MASO 33054)

This is an album compiling nine tracks from older albums, recorded between 1984 and 1988, most radically remixed, with one previously unreleased track, *A Hollow Grave*. It opens with *Headcrack Part 1*, a very pretty piece created with looped, layered and altered waves of shimmering guitar, and follows this up with the weird sonic swells, soars, and wordless vocals of *Letters To The Life Cycle*. It's beautiful music, atmospheric and powerful, while lacking the aggression of some of the group's other work. *Vocal Chant N. 1* is similar to Gregorian singing, while *The Peacock* is New Age guitar music, pure and simple. Sometimes beautifully serene, sometimes bland and New Agey, but certainly further proof of Controlled Bleeding's talent and versatility. [Materiali Sonori, 52027, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy]

Controlled Bleeding

Trudge LP (WaxTrax WAX 90)

Rippling percussion, churning noise, pounding beat, and a distinct sense of grandeur make up this sound. The rhythms lie somewhere between Test Dept and conventional hardbeat, and the singing is infused with feelings of religious or military passion. Powerful stuff, and very individual, given the current state of the hardbeat market. Even within a single track, it can range from sweet singing over military drumming to growled vocals over guitar-driven rock without losing any coherence. Nearly an hour of great rhythm 'n' noise. (Despite what the sleeve says there are ten tracks, not eight).

Cyberaktif

Tenebrae Vision LP (WaxTrax WAX118)

This was advertised in *EAR* magazine, inappropriately enough. With music by Skinny Puppy's Cevin Key and Rudolph Goettel and Front Line Assembly's Bill Leeb, you may already have a good idea as to what this sounds like. Strangely enough, the outer sleeve and record label credits Wilhelm Schroeder in place of Leeb, who only gets a look in on the inner sleeve. What happened here? The diseased, slowed-down electropulse from one group meets the harder beat of the second group. Unfortunately, the talents arrayed here don't always result in particularly inspired results, the dull *The Road Kill* which opens proceedings being one example. One track, *Paradiessiets* sees Neubauten's Blixa Bargeld join the crew, adding vocals, piano and production. It lacks the discipline of, say, Front 242, and also their ability to get to the point. The sound is less sharp, less hard, and the rhythms more prone to interruption or lethargy. When hardbeat gets as middle-of-the-road as this sometimes does, it's little better than an alternative version of pop or electronic rock. Fans of the above groups will probably enjoy this, but it's not as good as the individual work of F.L.A. or Skinny Puppy.

Delerium

Syrophenikan LP (Dossier Records DLP 7563)

Delerium is another side project of Bill Leeb of Front Line Assembly. It consists of mostly instrumental material, electrobeat with the emphasis on atmosphere, and with a distinct middle eastern influence. *Embodying*, with its pounding drums, threatening low tones, and mock-Arabic melodies, could have been written as a theme for war in Kuwait. *Shroud* takes a less epic tack, with more tribal, less artificial instrumentation, and a more subtle mood. *Mythos* does something similar, while *Fallen Idols* uses more thumping rhythms to get its warning message across. The album's closer, *Prophecy*, is a brilliant slice of atmosphere, the instru-

ments providing a taut eastern wail as male vocals sing hauntingly. Great stuff.

Anne Dudley & Jaz Coleman

Songs From the Victorious City LP/CD/cassette (China Records 847098)

A strange combination if ever there was one: an ex-Art of Noise technohack, and Killing Joke's mystical main man. The music on this album is an individual cross-fertilisation of Western beats and technology with Egyptian rhythms, instruments and themes. It's all authentic stuff of course, using *real* Egyptian musicians, *really* recorded in Cairo, and based on some serious study of Egyptian music. Not some kind of imperialist musical exploitation, oh no sir, definitely not. The music varies between the Western-influenced and upbeat, like *Endless Festival* or *Habebe*, and more atmospheric pieces like *The Awakening*. To the untrained ear, a lot of the Egyptian instruments sound like a cartoon version of Egyptian music - but this may just be cultural bias, and there's no way for me to really tell how authentic it is. It certainly doesn't pretend to be "ethnic" music, acknowledging its dual influences openly. What's lost in purity of style is made up for in accessibility. So despite a few misgivings, a nice album.

factor X

Directions cassette only (Tears Compilations TEAR 311)

This tape opens with rough, belching noise, squealing and ripping its way through the microphone, apparently produced by the extreme distortion of voice and other instruments. Other strange and grumbly sounds speak to the mike, gasping and rattling, and taped voices are intercut, the content of which gives some clue as to the ideas being explored. The second side uses more ambient sounds, monk-like vocals, and has a sparser feel. The tape is mostly very primitive and lasts for an hour. I enjoyed the foil-and-clingfilm packaging more than the music. The second side is definitely worth hearing, but the first is more likely to induce an uncontrollable desire to hit the EJECT button. [Available from Tears Compilations, c/o SHA 261, 1 rue de la Croix, St Simon, Paris 75020, France; or try factor X, ACS, P.O. Box 152, Exeter, Devon EX4 1QH]

Force Dimension

New Funk 12"/CD Single (KK Records KK063)

Dutch duo Force Dimension have been unjustly neglected in the past, with the ability to brew up some storming hard electro-dance, but this single will lose them a few friends, being noticeably toned down for a more commercial sound. It's all perfectly danceable, but lacks anything that would allow it to stand out from the crowds of perfectly danceable singles around. Of the three versions, the *Groovy Club Mix* is the least insipid, thanks to some squat bass and jaunty bleeps, and the removal of the high-pitched vocals that let down the other two mixes. The bonus track *Mockba* is pretty awful too.

Siegmar Fricke

Speedhouse & Exoticore cassette only (IRRE-Tapes IT 036)

This tape, by no means representative of the wide variety of electronic music released by this German cassette artist, showcases ten tracks of covertly and overtly Kraftwerkian electropop homage. *Day Off* introduces the luscious and radiant bleeps and whirs so typical of Kraftwerk, and the three parts of *Exoticore*

continue to explore that style of music. Lots of tinkling, shimmering, electronic synth which makes little attempt to hide its inspiration. The second side of the cassette is much more modern dance pop, still without singing, and varies from the distinctly uninspired to the brilliant buzzsaw bass and squittering f/x of *Debutant*. Well worth a listen for fans of Kraftwerk or their techno descendants. [Available from IRRE-Tapes]

Front 242

Tyranny (For You) LP (RRE Records RREL P 11)

Ummm. Pulsating bass, shuddering beats, electro rhythms here we come! This is another "great" Front 242 album, to the extent that any Front 242 album is great. Unfortunately it's nothing more than that - it's nothing new. Some tracks, notably *Moldavia*, *Trigger 2* and *Soul Manager*, hit a good hard groove, but the rest of it manages, paradoxically, to be both pretty good and completely unremarkable. Still nowhere near the edge, nowhere near as extreme as they hint at being. Mediocre, compared to what they promise.

Diamanda Galas

Plague Mass CD (Mute CDSTUMM 83)

These ten tracks (totalling 74 minutes) were excerpted from a live performance given by Galas in October 1990, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. (Two additional tracks are included on other formats). It is a culmination of her *Masque of the Red Death* project, performed throughout the late eighties, a response to AIDS and a response to popular reaction to AIDS sufferers. It is unashamedly blasphemous, a harrowing scream of horror at the treatment of so many, at the denial of their rights, and at the apocalypse awaiting if the epidemic continues. Galas mixes her own narrative with texts from the Bible and quotes from various other sources, and stirring them up into a stunning, chaotic, cacophonous storm of sound. Her voice recites, sings, and babbles glossolalia. It's difficult to listen to, and genuinely frightening. As a cry of rage it is extremely powerful. Highlights include *This Is The Law Of The Plague*, Galas trilling and octave-leaping voice lent additional impact by cataclysmic percussion, and the thumping pandemonium of *Let Us Praise The Masters Of Slow Death*. A superb work, easily one of the highlights of the year.

Gen Ken Montgomery

Endogeny cassette only (Direction Music DMC11)

Rising star of the American experimental scene and ex-force behind the experimental music shop and performance space Generator, Ken Montgomery makes some very attractive music. *Gattertor* starts with tinkling, careful bell-like sounds, apparently brass pipes, and rumbling noises made by scraping a drum skin. Ambient and atmospheric, but it's far from being an imitation of anything else. Threatening and spacious, it develops gradually getting louder and more intense, and is definitely enjoyable. The other track, *Father Demo Swears*, uses processed electronics, violin, voice and live recordings to create an apprehensive atmosphere, with tinkling and rippling noises combined with drones, clatters etc in a very interesting long instrumental landscape. Starts quietly and should definitely be allowed to get extremely loud. Still more evidence of the talent to be found out there in the cassette underground. [Available from Direction Music, 28 Nant y Felin, Pentraeth, Anglesey, Gwynedd LL75 8UY]

Bruce Gilbert

Insiding LP (Mute Records STUMM 71)

The Wire guitarist's third solo LP compiles two soundtracks for dance performances from 1989 and 1990. The first,

Bloodlines, starts with a repetitive, cycling soundscape of chiggering percussion and strange tones. This then breaks off into a languorous series of metallic bell tones and synth washes, and continues to shift and change in this manner. It's fine abstract instrumental music, though a bit hard to imagine anyone dancing to (it's a ballet, apparently). The title track, *Insiding*, is more rhythmic and percussive but otherwise similar. Both tracks are more atmospheric, sometimes a lot more laid back, much less coherent than the previous albums, *The Shivering Man* and *This Way*, and consequently not as immediately listenable or impressive.

The Glass Bead Game

The Asylum Tapes Vol. 1 cassette only (Flux Recordings FX001)

Previously active as the band Chimaera, producing an occasionally muddy gothic electrobeat, Colin Fraser and Dave Cooper have regrouped under a new name. Time has matured the music, but it remains a very enjoyable mix of the strange and accessible, with upbeat but not particularly hard electronics and a variety of weird and dark atmospheres. Similarities to Eurobeat are inevitable, but this music has much more personality than a lot of artists working in that genre. Well produced and great value for money (90 minutes for £2.50), it's mainly let down by disappointing vocals: punk legitimised an inability to sing and hardbeat seems to have taken the idea up with a vengeance. Otherwise very highly recommended. [Available from TGBG, 65 Withermoor Road, Winton, Bournemouth BH9 4NU]

Harrison & Chappelle

Know Control cassette only (Poison Plant)

The first side opens with distorted organ sounds, into which comes a man humming, more off-key synthesis, and various other fuzzy and discordant tones. Not pleasant listening. *Variations on a Theme by Eustachio Romano #1* also begins with a synthetic assault on harmony, the various found sounds and synthesizers combining to create an alien atmosphere. The second side contains shorter pieces, all different in style but still perversely anti-musical. The lack of conventional melody and harmony makes it difficult to listen to, and I alternated between thinking that it was either pretty good avant-garde work, or the pretty awful result of some very cheap production techniques. Poor sound sources combined with deliberately nasty editing and processing, seemingly random. Only you can decide whether these ten tracks are simply too far ahead of their time for us to understand, or a complete pile of crap. [Available from Poison Plant]

N.R.Hills

The Triumph of Death cassette only (Direction Music DMC014)

Unclassifiable stuff this, which is another way of saying that I'm hopelessly lost. As on previous releases, Nigel Hills combines an offbeat way of looking at music with avant-garde and more conventional structures to produce what can only be described as a conceptual album. A lot of the instrumentation here sounds very metallic or very plastic, but also highly individual. The rhythms tend to borrow from various sources: rock and "world" music for example (often with a noticeably oriental feel). What results shares some of the left-field sensibility of the Residents whilst somehow remaining fairly serious music. Baffling and very adventurous, it leaps from theme to theme with panache, but frequently manages to confuse the listener, and can be

quite hard to follow. It still manages to dance from the sweet and tonal to the harsh and discordant without losing its thread. Compared to his excellent earlier albums, a lot of this cassette seems empty and artificial, but it's still evidence of a highly unique creative muse. [Available from Direction Music, 28 Nant y Felin, Pentraeth, Anglesey, Gwynedd LL75 8UY]

H.N.A.S. / Vox Populi

Face to Face Volume 2 LP (Odd Size Records OS 06)

The second album in this French label's series brings together German soundscapers Hirsche Nicht Auf's Sofa, and French musicians Vox Populi! H.N.A.S.'s side, *Im Tal Der Möhre*, uses a mixture of collage and various instruments to produce weird, atmospheric and disturbing music. Their French counterparts create moody landscapes of sound using a variety of processed instruments and impressionistic, understated voices. *Homme, Femme, Autruche au Radiator* is excellent, unclassifiable stuff, changing from almost psychedelic rhythms to ominous scratchings without much difficulty. Both groups occasionally rely too much on traditional rock drums and guitars, but for the most part escape this horrible tendency and put their imagination to good use. [Available from Odd Size Records, 6 Rue Dupuis, 75003 Paris, France; Touch?; Ultima Thule]

Jack Hurwitz

A Thin Drone Silence cassette only (Poison Plant)

This is beautiful, serene ambience. Synthetic drones and washes float through the ether, subtle timbres and harmonies slowly sliding back and forth. It's very, very simple, and very, very effective. Accusations of it being a bland, New Age soundtrack would be quite unfair, as this is imaginative and refreshing stuff. Just what a reviewer needs after a hard day's listening to body-pumping Eurobeat and headache-inducing noise music. The feelings conjured by *A Thin Drone Silence* vary from the uniformly mellow and pleasant through various shades of more ambiguous contemplation: it's certainly not all sweetness and light. [Available from Poison Plant]

Insekt

Stressed 12" (KK Records KK 059)

Another Belgian band, another hardbeat record. Insekt have some of the most unintelligible growled and distorted vocals I've ever heard, plus a pounding beat, and a dense, dark sound. *Stressed* itself has some wonderfully low bass, along with distortion and some relaxed, slow rhythms. Pretty good, although I prefer something harder and faster.

Kode IV

Scratch Attack 12" (KK Records KK 058)

Energetic and confident hard dance music by the San Francisco-based Kode IV, with a hammer beat, loads of powerful and vibrant electronics and some rather inconsequential scratching in the background. Tremendous stuff! Oh yes, and lots of samples too. (And I hate 12"s which play at 33rpm without telling you!)

Manufacture

A Measured Response 12" (Netzwerk Europe NET 029)

Great electrobeat dance music, with the title track plus two versions of *Running Mad*, both taken from their latest album *Voice of World Control*. Hard, fast, vibrant, electrifying stuff, and some fun Arab chanting on *A Measured Response*. The presence of a *Desert Shield Mix* seems to indicate some sort of Gulf war connection, but unless you're psychic you'll have a hard time figuring out what it is. It's not too distin-

guishable from the rest of the electronic body music axis, but sufficiently well done that it doesn't matter. Nice line in vocal samples too.

Maylin Pact

The Burning Protest cassette only (Mind Scan)

Maylin Pact is Robert Maycock, who runs Mind Scan tapes. *The Burning Protest* mixes shattering metal bashing reminiscent of Einstürzende Neubauten with occasional distorted noise and voice. A particular highlight is *Destiny of Collapsed Perfection*, extremely energetic and resonant rhythmic pounding creating an effectively powerful atmosphere. *Life's Cries* uses a backing of random demolition with huge smashes of noise up front, something like an industrial equivalent of heavy metal power chords, and this more or less sums up the range of music featured here, although at times it takes a look at a much more ambient industrial atmosphere too. Generally noisy and nasty. At times the sound breaks up (presumably deliberately) too much to make it enjoyable listening, the noise is sometimes too dulled and undifferentiated, and the rhythmic ability doesn't quite meet up to Test Dept standards, but this tape certainly has its moments. Recommended to metal-bashing fans. [Available from Mind Scan]

Meredith Monk

Book of Days LP (ECM 1399)

Just possibly the best album reviewed in this issue, *Book of Days* consists of music for an avant-garde film directed by Monk, who also wrote all the soundtrack and took part in most of the performance. Almost entirely made up of abstract lyricless female vocals, the recording that results is a piece of sublime beauty. Strange, mystical and thoroughly enchanting. Several voices combine to create subtle, intricate, sonorous patterns. Hints of chorale and liturgical singing mix amongst impressionistic chattering. The lack of instruments, and the lack of lyrics, result in something far purer and more timeless than, say, Dead Can Dance would do, and correspondingly more delicious. Absolutely exquisite!

Morphogenesis

Stromatolites cassette only (Direction Music DMC19)

This tape from outstanding Welsh label Direction Music presents a 49 minutes made up of two side-long tracks. This is music that, like a lot of the material covered in *E.S.T.*, does its best to defy description. Abstract instrumental music is really about as close as it ever gets. Here there are strange synthesizers, scraping, percussive tinklings, drones and so on, and it's very nice spacious stuff. At times its fairly unstructured nature produces a set of sounds that simply don't match, but otherwise it's reasonably successful. Reminds me of water flowing and echoing through spiky and radioactive underground caverns, if that's of any help. The texture varies quite a bit whilst still remaining consistent. Some of the noise is quite industrial, some of it less so. [Available from Direction Music, 28 Nant-y-Felin, Pen-traeth, Anglesey, Gwynedd LL75 8UY]

Noise Unit

Frequency Response LP (Antler-Subway AS 5029)

This is a collaboration between Marc Verhaegen of The Klinik and Bill Leeb of Front Line Assembly. Fast, frantic rhythm races off the record, electric beeps and plastic percussion. I haven't heard The Klinik, so I don't know exactly what Marc Verhaegen's influence here is, but all I can hear is a less grungy F.L.A. *Forgotten Realm* is

an unusual, spacious track, rebounding rhythm traversing an empty domain. Most of the tracks are pleasant electrobeat, but otherwise unremarkable, the sum of the two collaborators lacking the verve and daring that each has alone. However, *In Vain*, which opens the second side, is an energetic and electrifying whirl of noise, and *Homage* is a fast and enjoyable journey through stranger sound textures. And then there are the throbbing, pulsating energies of *Agitate*. Not bad, but not great either.

Nostalgie Eternelle / Treble King

Let Me Out cassette only (Mind Scan)

These two bands, from Germany and the USA respectively, each have one side of this tape to themselves. Nostalgie Eternelle create a synthetic, rhythmic, instrumental music. Some of it works, combining mechanical, propulsive rhythms with murmuring drones, and some of it doesn't, most notably the sub-Ultravox synth and anti-singing of *Naked Life*. Treble King open with similarly tinny rhythms and proud synth bursts - just as unimpressive. But some of what they do is better, combining found voices and imaginative tape loops with rhythms slightly less simplistic than NE's and with a better idea of how to use those atmospheric drones. Not as good as his solo cassette however. [Available from Mind Scan]

Nouvelles Lectures Cosmopolites

Lost Sand Divinities CD only (Permis de Construire PER 022 / ETCD 01)

Rhythmic and atmospheric music, mostly synthetic as far as I can tell. Echoes, for me at least, of Coil. Very emotive and well done. NLC claim various psychic and magical benefits from the vibrations in this music. If it works for you, then that's great, but like most occult-influenced music, the effects and significance it has for the originators rarely translate well for their uninformed audience, who are much better off creating their own music so that they can individually tailor its effects. Taken just as music on its own merits, *LSD* is very pleasant ambient/instrumental stuff, with a nice edge of the bizarre. [Available from Permis de Construire, B.P. 256, 54005 Nancy Cedex, France]

1000 Homo DJs

Supernaut 12" (Wax Trax WAX 133)

Al Jourgensen (sorry, "Buck Satan") and pals cover a paean to the joys of chemical hallucination by Black Sabbath. Gargantuan guitars and swollen drums are the order of the day. A bit lacking in variety but, just, like, totally, **total**, y'know? Backed by *Hey Asshole*, which clatters along in an even more unvaried and powerful way.

PBK

Narcosis cassette only (PBK Recordings)

Packed with a hand-painted cloth inlay, this latest release by PBK continues his exploration of, ummm, noise. Flowing, churning, developing abstract noise textures. I've no idea how they were created or manipulated: they possess an authentic identity of their own somewhere between electronic, mechanical and environmental noise. PBK's aim is to use this unpromising material to reeducate our ears, show us that noise really is nice. His music has ranged in the past from the musical to the unlistenable, but this cassette is neither: it really does stand on its own merits, as a new listening experience. Post-apocalypse ambient atmospheres. [Available from PBK, 115 W. 33rd, San Bernardino, CA 92405-2505, USA]

Pessary

Inward Collapse LP (Dirter Promotions DPROMLP2)

This is the appearance on record of an album previously available on cassette from Mind Scan. It consists of twelve tracks of nightmare noise, brooding, malevolent atmospheres. They are made out of a melding of synthetic and acoustic sounds, heavily processed and distorted. One or two, like *Malfunction*, are more rhythmic, slices of cheap drum machine and dirty noise not unlike much of what was produced in the early eighties by any number of "industrial" or "post-industrial" bands. Little of it is particularly exciting, noisy or imaginative, and the atmosphere is distinctly detracted from by the amateurism. It falls between two stools of being unlistenable and apocalyptic, or listenable and atmospheric. Despite a few good moments, I found it disappointing. [Available from Dirter Promotions, P.O. Box 61, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 5QP]

Pessary

The Last Rites cassette only (Mind Scan)

On this tape, Pessary provide us with a series of atmospheric, ominous sound sketches. Drum machine is used, reasonably sparingly, as are numerous synthetic drones and occasional bashing and clanking of metal. Some of it is extremely effective, mostly the material that avoids the rather limited drum machine. However, as I said, these are really only sound sketches, and consequently tend to have little in the way of internal development, which can let down otherwise worthwhile material. Pessary have yet to really realise their potential, but the potential is very clearly there. [Available from Mind Scan]

Pigface

Gub LP/CD (Anagram Records GRAM 47)

Pigface is a collaboration between some of the best known names at the cutting edge of hardcore dance music, that is Ministry, Revolting Cocks, KMFDM, Nine Inch Nails, Skinny Puppy. The line up drawn from these bands includes Martin Atkins, Paul Barker, Chris Connelly, William Rieflin, Ogre, En Esch, Trent Reznor, Matt Schultz, Wilian Tucker and David Yow. Of course the major exclusion is Al Jourgensen, and his production (not to mention) musical artistry is replaced by the talents of Steve Albini.

I think you know what the music sounds like already! The CD contains 16 tracks including the 4 remixes from the *Spoon Breakfast* EP. It bears a remarkable likeness to Wiseblood's *Dirtish* LP, ranging from the slow, sleazy, drunken grind that is *Suck* to the massive tribal rhythm patterns of *The Bushmaster* and *Bushmaster Bushmaster Remix*. The vocal contributions come from many sources: Ogre, Yow, Reznor, Connelly and En Esch (who sounds just like Blixa Bargeld). A supergroup for the nineties and beyond, with the music to match; aggressive doesn't do it justice. As Trent Reznor exclaims: "Jesus Christ on Ecstasy!!" [Review by Matthew Riley]

Plant Bach Ofnus

Symudiad Ymddangosol y Lleuad cassette only (Direction Music DMC 10)

Welsh band Plant Bach Ofnus seem to alternate between innovative and experimental music, as on this release, and more commercial dance fodder, as featured on a couple of 12"s and Peel Sessions. This cassette has four tracks, each representing a phase of the moon. Full moon comes first, opening with enveloping tones,

gentle guitar, and soft percussion. First half moon combines natural-sounding cries with a very quiet drone, pluckings and a low rhythm, making a very open mood. New moon echoes the Cocteau Twins in its drumming, synth and guitars, echoing and moody. Second half moon fills the second side, abstract, billowing, ambient - lots of music deserves these adjectives, but as ever this is because music like this is hard to describe. This stuff is distinguished by its spacey, cosmic sounds. Faint voices float in the mix, and the mood becomes noticeably less serene and more chilling. [Available from Direction Music]

Psychick Warriors ov Gaia

Exit 23 12" (KK Records KK 055)

Rumbling, pulsing dance music that asks us to "return to the source". Very competent, but when hundreds of similarly competent singles are being released every week it needs a bit more than that. The **Warriors** have connections with The Temple ov Psychick Youth and the Katharos Foundation (a similar/smaller Dutch organisation) but it's hard to find anything very esoteric in the music itself. There's a ritualistic sort of feel in bits, and it begs your body to sway all over the place, but ... one song and a not-very-different remix is not a great deal, is it?

PTV³

Direction ov Travel CD (Temple Records TOPY 059CD)

This album is mostly a collaboration between Psychic TV's Genesis P-Orridge, and avant-garde percussionist Z'Ev. Gen plays the Tibetan bells, Z'Ev the Tibetan bowls plus drums, and they all help mix it all together. Opening with an empty little piece of bell-tinkling, further tracks are given their texture mostly through the use of sound processing treatments, which is in some ways a pity because it doesn't really let character of the instruments themselves shine through. Needless to say, the instigators of this album would probably claim all sorts of mystical significance for it. However doubtful that must be, what remains is a nice, albeit unadventurous, album of subdued atmospheric ambience, shimmering and droning sound textures, with ritual percussion giving it a very occasional propulsive assist. Very good for what it is, but it never really travels anywhere particularly interesting. Too somnolent to ever really get going, too undeveloped to engage your concentration.

Ravi Shankar & Philip Glass

Passages LP (Private Music 210947)

Glass, probably the best known of the so-called Minimalist composers, teams up here with Indian maestro Ravi Shankar, one of the early sources of inspiration for his music when they first met in 1965. The music here is a serene, flowing blend of the Indian and Minimalist elements, opening with the beautiful *Offering*, sax raga over a typical Glass theme. The next track, *Sadhanipa* is less interesting, with the two talents failing to integrate, and uses of some very clichéd material. Similarly, the Glass solo composition *Channels and Winds* echoing some of his earlier material (eg *Koyaanisqatsi*) lacks clarity and impact. The joint *Ragas in Minor Scale*, with its vibrant plucked strings, and tripping progress, is much more enjoyable. A lot of the Glass elements on this recording harken back to his earlier days, and the only thing that seems to be keeping his music alive is the more authentic ethnic feel. Sometimes this album gels, sometime it doesn't, and it's never as satisfying as it could have been.

Sixth Comm

Asylum LP (Eyas Media EYAS 013)

Brooding synth washes introduce the first track *Gift*, an effectively contemplative and dignified atmosphere. Pa-

trick O'Kill narrates the lyrics over steadily more apocalyptic synths, and the lyrics are as gothic / romantic as ever. Great fun if you can get into a suitably weighty and profound frame of mind. I find it difficult, I must say. *Red Cloak, Red Hat* marries a regular beat to similar lyrics and strange background noise. It's certainly successful, if you can cope with the overwrought singing and general portentousness. *Birth of the Seven* is the only track which really reaches away from song territory, combining trance drumming with shrieking and howling to create a nice ritual mood. It's all full of a grand ambience, and certainly with a very special character of its own: I can't think of anyone else making music quite like this. At times it balances strangely between the accessible and the left-field, with elements of both combining with interesting results. [Available from Sixth Comm, BCM Cenaz, London WC1N 3XX]

Sixth Comm

Morthogenesis mini-LP (Eyas Media EYAS 059)

Hardly "new music" despite Sixth Comm's reputation for standing outside the mainstream. This compilation of five tracks from 1985 to 1987 presents unremarkable but adventurous indie rock music, written by Patrick L. O'Kill. It is energetic, grand, gothic and completely unafraid of going over the top. Crashing percussion, emotive strings, and vocals frequently narrated rather than sung. Too much angst! The singing might as well be Frank Sinatra or Tom Jones as far as I'm concerned - too self-consciously soulful, and as a result, too plastic. If you're the kind of person continually caught in an obsessive, passionate, existential crisis, then you may feel differently ... [Available from Sixth Comm, BCM Cenaz, London WC1N 3XX]

Sixth Comm

Seething LP (Cenaz 156)

A special limited edition release, *Seething* is inspired by SEIDR magic and "the Serpent Mysteries", ecstatic shamanic rituals with their roots in Norse Runic magic. Patrick O'Kill and partner Amodali attempt here to document their sexual magic and create music exploring it further. I found it a lot more enjoyable than the other Sixth Comm reviewed above. It's just as dramatic, if not more so, but Amodali's venomous voice is a very effective tool added to the blend of random and rhythmic percussion, strings and other noises found here. Amodali's singing is a lot rawer than Patrick's, and the music here is refreshingly dark and dangerous. The highlight is *The Birth of the Seven*, on this outing a shriekingly powerful track, with whispering vocals leading into tremendous tribal drumming. Most of the remainder is equally effective, even if the lyrics are occasionally a mite clichéd. A very enjoyable record. [Available from Sixth Comm, BCM Cenaz, London WC1N 3XX]

Solanaceae Tau

Outdoor Expressions cassette only (IRRE-Tapes IT 039)

Gothic electropop reminiscent passingly of Legendary Pink Dots and especially Attrition. Opening with *The Wolf Song*, with depressed female vocals amidst sullen synthesizers, a bit like Macbeth's witches on a very bad day, it struggles to lift itself out of wristslitting mode. Most of the vocals sound like Siouxsie, and as well as the bands already mentioned, some of the music echoes Portion Control and other early eighties types. Highlights include *Ethnological Hazard II*, with echoing, bouncing rhythms and slightly more expressive singing, and *The Algorhythm Dream*, atmospheric and entrancing vibrant electric rhythms. The rest alternates between the

dismal (in both senses of the word) and the quite interesting. [Available from IRRE-Tapes]

Stereo Tactic Device

Lostland CD Single / 12" (KK Records KK062)

Good value for money this, what with four different tracks rather than two versions of one, as is so often the case. *Lostland* is grandiose electropop with soaring synths and an upright rock rhythm. *Stereotaxic Device* (equipment used to monitor the brain by animal experimenters) employs a low and threatening rhythm & bass line, over which dulled vocals growl viciously. The pretty good *Cloud CFC* enters similar territory, mixing the rumbling beat with more yearning synth, and *Slash and Burn* again has those trademark hardbeat vocals, over more spartan percussion and a less convincing sound. On the whole, nice stuff, especially for, say, fans of Skinny Puppy, who are one obvious reference point. A Los Angeles band, Stereo Tactic Device are due to tour Europe in September with AAAK.

Symboliks

Ticket to Everywhere cassette only (Chainsaw CSC 011)

Somewhere in here there's some good music struggling to escape, but it doesn't always manage it. At times I'd call it rock with a healthy influence of neo-psychedelia and experimental music, not always very well performed and not particularly well recorded. At most other times, for example on the impressive *Days Without*, it's a lot more interesting, combining samples, acoustic and electronic instruments to create strange and dark feelings. Some of it's extremely atmospheric, like the beautiful *You Must Pay*, some of it quite powerful despite a certain primitivism. Loads of music for your money too. [Available from Chainsaw Cassettes]

Test Dept.

Materia Prima LP/CD (Jungle DEPT 1)

These recordings were produced originally as a limited release as part of Test Dept's ongoing campaign to raise money, pay off debts, and fund other projects. Consisting mostly of excerpts from shows performed in 1988/89, these are instrumental slices of atmosphere, with none of the percussive racket that characterises Test Dept's more familiar sound. *Landrites* for example, combines didgeridoo, distant metallic clangs, synthetic thunder and ghostly female voices to create a barren, dark soundscape. *Pipes and Didgeridoo* is exactly what it says, an astonishingly beautiful meeting of Scottish and Australian influences. *Apocalypse* presents more ambient, post-collapse atmosphere, alien voices chattering around a ruined landscape. Finally, *Funeral* matches piano with various other instruments to create a spartan little dirge, simple and effective, and also a very unlikely piece for Test Dept. The other two tracks, both retreads of old ideas from *The Unacceptable Face of Freedom*, are both much less successful. Otherwise, a surprising album, and a good one.

Test Dept.

Pax Americana & New World Order 12"s (Ministry of Power / Jungle MOP 5T & MOP 7T)

Another shortage of money, another attempt to break into the dance scene. *Pax Americana* chants "We love Saddam Hussein" - you cynical bunch of cash-in merchants! Actually, it's not at all bad, even if it's certainly not Test Dept as we know and love them. A synthesised, funky dance tune with vaguely middle-eastern overtones, pulsing bass, and mock-ethnic percussion. Only the growling ranting of Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" really sounds like the Testies, and it doesn't fit well with the music. *New World Order* steps into more convincingly danceable territory, but

is otherwise unremarkable. The artificial percussion still retains some vague echo of Test Dept's more familiar sound, and the George Bush samples remind us what it's all about, but ... Buy it because they deserve your money? Hmmm.

Test Dept.

Pax Britannica CD (Ministry of Power / Jungle MOP 6CD)

A bit of a change for the boys from Brixton. In keeping with their growing acceptance by the art world, Pax Britannica sees Test Dept joining forces with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, of all people, for a new version of their current stage show. Live, this is raw, aggressive, intensely exciting stuff, combining massed drums with numerous other instruments and some wonderfully angry ranting. Here, a lot of the rawness has been stripped out and replaced by orchestral grandeur. For old fans, it takes a bit of getting used to, but it's worth persevering, representing probably the group's most consistent and powerful statement on record. It's a powerful condemnation of British imperialism, complete with samples of Thatcher, Churchill and others in amongst the strings and percussion. A culmination of several years work, this is an excellent album. Go see it live too, because although this is impressive and moving, it's not as thrilling or uplifting as seeing it in flesh. And of course, your speakers may find it a little different to duplicate the sheer exhilarating **noise** of the live performance.

Treble King

King Size cassette only (Mind Scan)

Treble King is an American, Mark E Brooks, using tapes, radio, samples, loops, effects and voice to create, on this outing, a simple but extremely effective atmospheric music. *My Home and Feet* sets things going with its shimmering, undulating patterns, a kind of rhythmic ambient music looping minimal sources to create a very attractive sound. *Sunshine* loops distorted sounds and voice to sound something like a rash-covered Residents. Other tracks focus on a harsh and distorted rhythm rather than the gently swaying wash of sound colour, but it's all well done. It's imaginative, and definitely recommended. [Available from Mind Scan]

Triptic of a Pastel Fern

2nd Jefferson Blythe cassette only (Poison Plant)

Emphasis Crelm (not an untypical track title) leads off the seventeen tracks here with a fast-paced rhythm and soaring, wailing electronics, echoes of psychedelic rock and cosmic music fuelling a strange, buzzy feel. This sets the style for the first side: shimmering electronic textures over careful, rapid rhythms, not always especially imaginative, but still effectively done. You can sway to it, maybe even jump about, or lie back and let the music carry you off into some far away space. Some of it's pretty inane, especially the more humorous second side, without the saving grace of true self-parody. But generally, energetic and weird, with a sense of humour that wouldn't hurt most of the new music reviewed in *E.S.T.* Most likely to appeal to Residents fans, although the first side of the cassette is a lot less self-indulgent and more musical. [Available from Poison Plant]

Vasilisk

Acqua LP (Musica Maxima Magnetica eee 04)

Japanese musicians on an Italian label, understandably hard to find here in Britain. It's an album of

ritualistic music, occasionally ambient, frequently pretty energetic, but always based around complex rhythmic percussion. Unlike some, none of the percussion is synthetic, and the natural sound that results is very refreshing. Ambient vocals and nice rhythmically plucked strings introduce the studio side. *Awakening* gives us ominous ethnic percussion, growing in intensity, while *Photongnoul* is slower, more mournful. *Taksim II* provides energetic, rolling, thundering drumming, and the side ends with *Fangs and Claws*, returning to a more relaxed sound, running water and undulating synth tones setting the very beautiful mood, breaking into a powerful rhythm at the end, closing the side perfectly. The live side opens with waves of synthetic energy, sliding into a strange rhythmic drive. The drums are occasionally more rocky, and as a result it's a lot less enchanting. Still beats the pants of most music around nowadays though! It all has a Japanese feel without it being Japanese music. [Available from Ultima Thule; Staalplaat; Earthly Delights]

Voltage Control

Antithesis Song 12" (Antler-Subway AS5044)

This second release from the Dutch duo, Arno Peeters and Tibor Fulop will appeal to just about anyone who can dance. Although the title track borrows its main pulses from many a house tune, 808 State's *In Yer Face* is a good example, it is interpreted in an altogether threatening way, sounding as if a nail is being drawn across the bonnet of a car! This is set to a back-beat of intense percussion and industrial effects, complimented by a female voice which actually works for a change and doesn't detract from the product. The B-side reminds me of Ministry's *Twitch* epoch, with its reliance on drum patterns at the forefront of the track, grungy guitars behind. I feel that this is primarily an experimental piece and Hardclub 92 devotees will undoubtedly love it. I shall look forward to an LP release scheduled for the autumn. [Review by Matthew Riley]

Basie V Webster

Head of Nails cassette (Mind Scan)

An hour of music by still more people who I've never heard of. It starts with *One Underneath*, something like a more synthetic and more restrained Cocteau Twins. Light, floating female vocals across a cheap synthpop bed. It only really gets going on the second side, exploring everything from a powerful mechanical assault to impressionistic and atmospheric synth / piano combinations. Pleasant, well executed, and pretty undemanding. Enjoyable stuff, and unusual for Mind Scan! [Available from Mind Scan]

The Young Gods

Play Kurt Weill LP (Play it Again Sam BIAS 188)

The Swiss masters of sonic superdrama cover eight songs by Weill on this album, including well known items like *Mackie Messer* and the *Alabama Song*. Weill, the German composer best known for creating *The Threepenny Opera* along with Bertold Brecht, would probably have approved. *Mackie Messer* is passionate and venomous, constantly ready to erupt into heavy metal fury, but all the more effective while it manages to retain its restraint. When it loses it, the passion is eclipsed by the clumsy musical clichés. *Speak Low* has potential with its rolling drums and riffing bass, and Franz's voice is really too classically beautiful for my taste, but *Alabama Song* is better, full of electric energy and windy angst, set off against a cheap cycling accordion. *Seeräuber Jenny* sees a meeting between the Residents and Einstürzende Neubauten, if such a thing is imaginable. Reference points? Ummm ... only Neubauten's *Haus der Lüge* springs to mind, although that's a far less conventional and more powerful album. The Young Gods are simply too compromised on this album by the rock milieu they have

chosen to work in. Could have transcended, but, ummm, it didn't.

:zoviet*france:

Look Into Me LP+12"/CD (Charm LP 14)

Zoviet France are one of Newcastle's two best known experimental groups, the other being Nocturnal Emissions. On this album they cycle and recycle abstract noises into a constantly changing texture, composed of sonorous drones, grindings, scrapings, squeakings and so on. It's atmospheric without conjuring up any obvious imagery at all, thanks to the unreality of most of the sounds used. Occasionally, the overtly machine-like nature of some sounds has a familiar feel. The LP consists of the spacious and disjointed side-long *Cair Camouflet*, backed by ten other tracks, and the 45rpm companion record provides another three. Enjoyable and imaginative. [Available from Charm, 5 Wingrove Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE4 9BP; Earthly Delights; Ultima Thule]

Various Artists

Assemblage 1990 cassette only (PBK Recordings)

An hour of music compiled by American noise-artist PBK. Nine artists are featured, of whom the best include Asmus Tietchens, whose *Im Netzwerk* consists of metallic, reverberating percussion overlaid with abstract sound effects; PBK's purposeful mixture of mechanical abstraction, a crescendo of increasingly distorted and noisy clamour; rumbling, droning clouds of sulphurous noise from Illusion of Safety; Art Simon's strange and intense sound collage; and the very predictable but pleasant steely ambience of Vidna Obmana's *All Glanced in Mind*, from Belgium. Also featured are Sound Theater, Hands To, Joseph Nechvatal, and Jim O'Rourke, most of whom produce interesting abstract compositions, with only a couple of duds. [Available from PBK, 115 W. 33rd, San Bernardino, CA 92405-2505, USA]

Various Artists

A Bead To A Small Mouth LP (Barooni BAR 001)

This compilation gathers together some of the best known talents of the post-industrial sound collage scene. Avant-garde surrealists Nurse With Wound open with a found text, a strange narrative recited over a variety of strange harmonies, a sense of ambient mysterious electricity. Pleasant but hardly startling. Graeme Revell (ex-S.P.K.) and Anthony Mannix do something similar, with a sparser, hollower feel to it. The texts are subtle, poetic and atmospheric, but how many times can you listen to them? The second side contains pieces by Mother Tongue (a collaboration between Andrew McKenzie of the Hafler Trio, metal percussionist Z'Ev and linguist Doro Franck), consisting of unlistenable chopped up noise and vocals (which is playing while Top of the Pops is on my TV, making an interesting combination), and Zoviet France, who create an empty, bleak textured soundscape, which although still pretty dull remains the best track on the album. [Available from Ultima Thule]

Various Artists

A Joyful Noise cassette only (Sterile Records SRC 10)

A 90-minute compilation of experimental and strange music from around the world. The most well-known contributors include Nocturnal Emissions, Front Line Assembly and those Christian industrialists Blackhouse, and there are another 17 here. A completely different

selection from those on the Auricle tape (below), showing just how much breadth and diversity there is in the experimental music scene. Sue Ann Harkey's *Koto Tuning* is almost beautiful, but not quite. Xaliman and the Orchestra do nice things with strings, bowed and plucked, a jungle atmosphere, while Plant Bach Ofnus's offering is not up to their usual standard. Blackhouse turn the tables upon satanic subliminals, subverting *Stairway to Heaven* hilariously. No track times, and so it's frequently hard to tell who's who. The music ranges from difficult experimental material to more commercial sub-hardbeat stuff, and since it's a lot more upbeat than *Escape From the Cage*, it's much easier to get into. Recommended. [Available from Staalplaat; Earthly Delights]

Various Artists

Escape From the Cage Vol. 2 cassette only (Auricle AMC 041)

A 90-minute compilation of experimental and strange music from around the world. The most well-known contributors include Arcane Device, Peter Frohmader and Asmus Tietchens, but there are another 11 here. Most of the pieces are atmospheric, weird, abstract soundscapes, recorded with mixtures of tape collage, electronics, conventional instruments, and sampled sounds. At its most accessible it remains very difficult listening! Highlights include *Les Jungles Apocryphes* by Sleaze Art, with its shimmering, groaning, painful basses, Frohmader's contribution, and Michael Winnerholt's strange and understated *Yuko*. Other contributors: Jack Tamul, Alto Stratus, Clothearz, Limpe Fuchs, Morphogenesis, Context, Biomechanoid, Frame Advance, N.R. Hills. [Available from Ultima Thule]

Various Artists

INRI cassette (Cold Spring CS 001)

The compilation that launched Justin Mitchell's label, and still the most prominent feature on his current reissue schedule. The seller is undoubtedly Psychic TV live, as raw, emotive and lethargic as ever, but more interesting are tracks by Bruise, *Religion (Anderson Mix)*, a numb, diseased electro-rock pustule; Psychopath's extremely brutally pounding *WhoreHammer*; and Thee Grey Wolves' *Psychick Rising*, excellent throbbing rhythm and ominous drones. Five other contributions come from both the rock and industrial fields, and are less impressive. [Available from Cold Spring Records, 87 Gloucester Avenue, Delapre, Northampton NN4 9PT]

Various Artists

In the Shadow of the Cross Vol. 1 cassette only (Mind Scan)

This compilation brings together three artists: Nostalgie Eternelle, Dave Kirby, and Information Aggression. NE provide four tracks of throbbing, pulsating, electro-mechanical rhythms, into which shuddering, clanging and twanging noises jump in and out, along with found radio voices. None are particularly great, but of these, the energetic *View Round* is most successful. Dave Kirby has three tracks, atmospheric soundscapes. *Striving for a Perfect Balance* sets off ambient tinklings and synthetic tones, developing very prettily, a very enjoyable track, reminiscent of Kitaro. Ambient electronic drones, interesting harmonies, shimmering alien electricity and harsh vibrations characterise his other two pieces, both of which are excellent. Information Aggression create a billowing, dulled, subdued feel, with voices talking about a stripsearch dimly heard in the background. This is very badly recorded, hissy, but this possibly only adds to the oppressive feeling. [Available from Mind Scan]

Various Artists

Mouvements CD only (La Legende des Voix LDV 003)

This limited edition of 1000 features a variety of artists working in the post-industrial, abstract atmospheric area, and marks out La Legende des Voix as a label well worth watching. Un Drame Musical Instantane open with ten minutes of very strange sound collage, weird sonic bursts enhanced by occasional singing and unidentifiable noises; Brume's *Red Shift Infiltration* is similar, underpinned with a regular bass rhythm, and creating a pleasant mix of the melancholy and industrial; Philip J. gives an ambient, billowing, alien landscape - all subtle tones and colours sliding past each other; Zoviet France's long piece varies from the ambient to the poundingly noisy with consummate skill, abstract noises manipulated god knows how; Desaccord Majeur give a nicely understated rhythmic piece too. Others featured include Muslimgauze, Cranioclast, Vrischika, Asmus Tietchens and De Fabriek. Extremely enjoyable and challenging. [Available from La Legende des Voix, c/o 21 Rue du 8 Mai 1945, 37270 Montlouis, France]

Various Artists

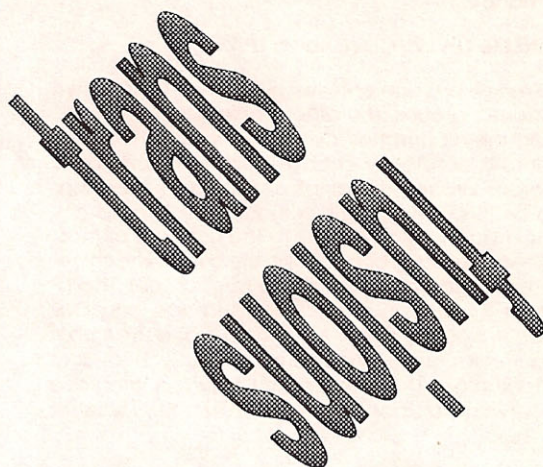
Music Electronic 1989 cassette only (Poison Plant)

This one hour compilation features George Fox, Jack Hurwitz, Todd Fletcher, Rob Lippert, Triptic of a Pastel Fern and Dan Joseph. Triptic tracks include a couple of good instrumentals with very individual synth on top of insistent rhythms, using sounds varying from Synergy-like harmonies to what evoke the feel of electric wires. Except for Pink Dots fans, their song included will be a lot less fun. Fletcher's soundtrack-like pieces sounded to my ears too lifeless and atmospheric, but Lippert's track, while initially sounding similar, has a lot more personality to it. Fox's *Strange Visitation* is ambient and pleasant but little more, while his other track explores a stranger, more abstract atmosphere. Hurwitz's tracks are nowhere near as impressive as those on *A Thin Drone Silence*. Joseph's contribution is most interesting and enjoyable, with great metallic swashes of noise shuddering around in the air, and a variety of other ambient tones. Definitely worth a listen, although occasionally it isn't quite up to scratch. [Available from Poison Plant]

Various Artists

UK Electronics Volume 2 cassette only (Mind Scan)

Another Headache, Headmen and Empty Heads are amongst the bands on this compilation. Some kind of a pattern? Maybe. Empty Heads start things off with *Jesus Freak*, rhythm box, vocals and synths reminiscent of early to mid eighties Legendary Pink Dots. This is the template for the rest of side one: rhythm and synth, with and without vocals, nice if you like that sort of thing, but with a very unremarkable amateur feel. Side two is introduced by Another Headache's *The Cacophony Continues*. A low rhythm drives the swirling sounds along, but it doesn't go anywhere, like all the Headmen's contributions, more electronic rhythms and synth warblings. Another Headache's other contribution, *Factory Floor*, ambient and unclassifiable sounds floating and chugging around, is far more enjoyable, as is Random's gurgling *Journey Through an Oesophagus*. Amoeba's cover of Gary Numan's *Are Friends Electric* is like an instrumental version of that track with Julian Clary talking over the top. Musical value somewhere less than zero: personal jokes rarely translate well into public ones. Opportunities knocked, I'm afraid. [Available from Mind Scan]



An interview with Paul Lemos of Controlled Bleeding

Controlled Bleeding has been around for quite a while, with their first vinyl being released as *Knees and Bones* on the American Psychout label in 1983. Their music has developed from its primitive, noisy beginnings quite considerably.

From their interest in harsh noise music developed an ambient, atmospheric, grandiose and gothic music, experimenting with abstract compositions through highly regarded albums like *Between Tides* on Swedish label Multimood, and *Music for the Scourging Ground* on Sub Rosa in Belgium. Lots of use of echo and reverb to create as emotive and ominous an atmosphere as possible.

Much of their more recent music has explored the more ambient aspects of this sound, such as the Sub Rosa LP *Les Nouvelles Musiques de Chambre 1*, a record shared with Benjamin Lew. The Italian compilation *Gag* (see reviews) showcases this attitude too.

As their music has matured, so has their approach to its creation. Originally quite spontaneous and improvised, in recent years their understanding of their art has led them to create more carefully crafted music, more structured. Meanwhile, they have moved on to yet another new style, this time on American hardcore dance label, WaxTrax.

With their album *Trudge*, and various 12" releases, they have explored a more rhythmic, more commercial music. Hard rhythms combine with the gothic feel of some of their other music to produce truly individual "hardbeat" music. The majestic feel of the singing reminds me of Killing Joke's more angst-ridden moments, and the drum patterns remain reasonably unique. Also on WaxTrax, they have released a 12" single under the name of *Joined at the Head*, exploring the hardcore guitar / drums music so beloved of Ministry and others, and doing it with considerably more panache. This music continues alongside their interest in more experimental, instrumental work.

Controlled Bleeding consists of Paul Lemos, Joe Papa and Chris Moriarty in various combinations, although Lemos is the core of the group. He has also released various solo recordings (eg. *Sludge* and *Hog Floor* on Dossier Records), as well as compiling the *Dry Lung* series of compilations, which have documented various strands of the post-industrial experimental music scene.

The following interview was conducted by post in April 1991.

EST: Why do you make music? George Bush doesn't - I don't - why do you?

PL: The reason why one pursues a particular interest or passion isn't easy to explain. Music has been my only love since I was about 10 years old. I don't know what stimulated this, but it has existed as long as I can recall. I think that some people need a creative outlet to balance their overall existence and allow for stability, and music serves this need for me.

EST: It may be a boring question, but what got you started? And what caused you to change towards more experimental music?

PL: I've always been interested in the most extreme music I could find - this has been the case all my life in the late 60s through the 90s - I've never learned to play by the book - the whole process was based on experimenting, as it still is today. Through time, this experimenting brought me to a point of certain musical competence. So, presently, I have the ability to pursue different musics. But for most of my musical career, I've had no choice but to be an experimenter.

EST: Why do you **still** make music, after all these years?

PL: I still work on music because it is a release; it's something that I can give myself to emotionally. I can empty the venom and the depression through this process of making personal music.

EST: Do you get bored easily? Your musical style has changed frequently since Controlled Bleeding's inception.

PL: Yes, I do get bored easily; this is true. But we work with different musical styles because we're excited by a lot of musics - I've always been very open to music of various styles and this openness just broadens as I get older and as my tastes move back to musics of the 1100s - 1500s, music that I knew little of when I was twenty years old. So, as I become involved with different musics, as a listener, I find inspiration.

EST: How do you regard your releases? As lasting musical works, brief experiments, documents of continuing developments?

PL: I don't regard them as anything more than a sort of personal diary of certain creative developments or regressions. Some of the earlier works haven't dated well - some of them were done without a lot of care or technical knowledge. So I block out certain records, I disown them in my mind. But the CD rereleases give me a chance to improve my original errors. LPs like *Curd* make me ill. But the CD that will appear is very exciting I think.

EST: You've released a lot of material - over twenty albums by my count. How much of this do you think stands the test of time?

PL: No, we haven't issued twenty Controlled Bleeding lps. As far as material, there are only about 11 records (which is still a lot) - then there have been a number of reissues, compilations etc. because so much of our stuff has been long out of print. I'd say that a lot of it stands the test of time in terms of content, but recording quality often has been poor.

I wish that the work was all well recorded a lot better, but it was all done in my small home studio - I never learned about mixing, recording etc. So, the earlier records were pretty primitive because of my lack of knowledge. I wish I could go back and apply the knowledge I presently possess.

EST: Commercial groups may only release three or four albums in their lifetime: are you more prolific because you apply less quality control? Do you consider it an advantage to be able to release such a variety of material without having to justify it commercially?

PL: You're quite right, I've issued a lot more stuff than most commercial groups (but less (probably) than Nurse With Wound!) It's a completely different scene.

Rarely do I work under restriction of binding contracts etc ... The first several projects were done for small labels and sold a thousand or two thousand copies, then went out of print.

So, we're not thinking about talking about a release that is selling a fucking ton and being distributed worldwide. At this point Controlled Bleeding is a more commercial entity, and thus we have to deal with contracts that are quite restrictive. In fact the next releases will be under very rigid contract. So yeah, I could always do whatever I wanted, issue anything I was working on. When working on 4 and 8 track, one is a bit more prolific than when working on complex midi-stuff on 24 track... So it's been a 6 year evolution of sorts.

EST: How do you feel about that perennial curse of "experimental" musicians: obscurity?

PL: As mentioned, I like a lot of musics. Although I experiment with sound, I enjoy structured technical music as well (played in my own warped way). So, I don't care whether experimental music remains in obscurity. If it became commercially acceptable, it probably wouldn't be very exciting any more. So, I don't think about obscurity. I look for appropriate labels for the various projects I'm doing - some are obscure, some aren't.

EST: Do you wish you could release music with better packaging, on better formats, or to a wider audience?

PL: CD is a fine format, most of the packaging has been fine. Really, I have few complaints. Again, the distribution depends on the label.

EST: Would you release more commercial music in order to get better known or to subsidise your other projects?

PL: The more commercial music I do is done because I very much enjoy it. I don't give a damn for making \$ from music. It is strictly done for my own fulfillment. So no, I don't do beat music to fund experimental work. The experimental work is the least interesting for me at this point.

EST: Is it all an uphill struggle financially, and if so, what keeps you going?

PL: I teach high school, as I have for a decade, so I don't view music as a means of income - the money has been okay, but it's just reinvested. So, as mentioned music is a need, it's not done for \$ or for fun. It's a necessary part of daily existence for me.

EST: What are your future plans for Controlled Bleeding, both in terms of forthcoming releases, and longer term development?

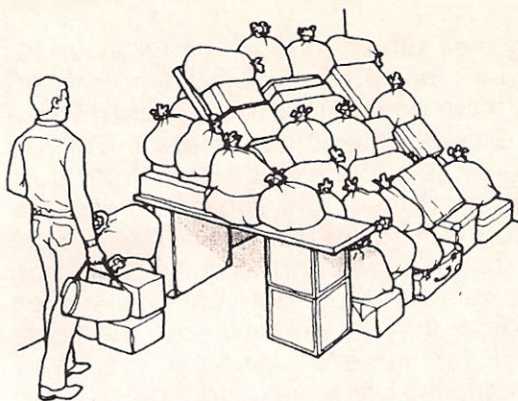
PL: We're looking to issue the future work on a decent major label that will allow creative freedom. I want simply to record whatever is exciting at a given time - there is no musical vision here. Our other project, **Fat Hacker**, is now signed to Road Runner and is most satisfying in its huge, grinding ugliness. Controlled Bleeding is one outlet and it will be whatever it should be on an emotional level.

EST: What sort of music has inspired you in the past and now? How did you get into this sort of music?

PL: A lot of music has inspired me. Everything from Fun-house (Stooges), Kick Out the Jams (MC5), Electric Prunes, early Pere Ubu, Sex Pistols, E. Varesé, George Crumb, early Swans, Arvo Part, Cage, Eno ... etc ... Everything that has ever excited me has been of some unconscious inspiration. I listen to a lot of opera, sacred music, rap, noise, etc ... So all of this interest has been synthesised somehow. Also a lot of film and poetry has had a potent influence.

EST: Do you feel the underground music "ghetto" is healthy at the moment?

PL: I don't consider it. It's very varied. What's underground and what's commercial - these are very relative terms. I enjoy a lot of the Earache stuff as well as Public Enemy, Dust



Devils, Lustmord, Sonic Youth. So, the underground will at a point become the commercial. We just have to wait a bit for audiences to catch up to the music. I've become very bored with N.W.W., Current 93 and 90% of what is termed as experimental music or the underground. I'd much rather hear GodFlesh. Are they still underground?

EST: Are you an artist or a musician? Performer or recorder?

PL: I'm not a performer. An artist? Well, I'm not sure what constitutes an artist. Yes, obviously I'm a recorder. Beyond this I do not think about these categories - this is one you'd have to answer.

EST: Thoughts on collaboration? The differences between your solo work and group work?

PL: Solo work, group work. I suppose it doesn't vary a lot. Much of what goes under Controlled Bleeding has been solo. When Chris and I collaborate we develop solid structure songs. My solo stuff tends to be a bit noise oriented and looser. Collaboration with Chris has become very fruitful - but outside of this, I don't have a lot of time to collaborate.

EST: Some of Controlled Bleeding's recent work could easily be described as pompous and overblown in its sheer power and scope. Any comment?

PL: Pompous, overblown? For you, perhaps. For me, it just came to be. Again, I don't think about whether the music is pompous. I don't like pompous music. So if this is the way you hear some of the work, it wasn't intended. As mentioned, I make music for my own pleasure and can only hope others will find value in it.

EST: Some of it is also unpleasant, full of suppressed violence, power and evocative of almost totalitarian imagery. Am I being unfair here, Paul?

PL: I guess for some, the music may be considered unpleasant, ugly etc ... Again, wait till **Fat Hacker** appears - I think this will redefine our ugliness. The music we do always reflects some internal conflict or personal angst or insecurity ... So, yeah, a lot of it probably seems pretty charged up - either violent, or as you say pompous. So, no you're not being unfair. But again, we don't set out to annoy or repulse. It's just personal music, limited by our technical ability. A lot of our music is about spiritual struggle, coming to grips with one's own insignificance, one's powerlessness, one's inability to understand the deep past or future.

Yes, It's The All Singing, All Dancing, British Anarchist Scene!

This is intended to be a semi-regular space, providing the opportunity to delve into specific aspects of the underground media, music, publishing or otherwise. This issue's look at the UK anarchist periodicals is not just intended as an excuse to publicise my own political interests, just as an introduction to an area that tends to live very much within its own ghetto, and not get out much. Next issue I hope to feature as many UK occult magazines as possible (and there are plenty!) Not everyone's going to be interested, but that's not important. What is important is that those of us who live outside the mainstream publicity machine might become a little bit less insular. Suggestions for future areas are welcome, as are volunteers to cover them.

So on with the show. All but one of the mags mentioned below comes from the British Isles, the interloper being included basically because it's a far better magazine than any of the others, and therefore worth a bit of a mention. If a price is only given for the country of origin, and you happen to live somewhere else, the best bet is to send cash in that country's currency (well packaged), or an I.M.O., plus a generous bit extra to cover additional mailing costs. Most of those listed below are available from mail-order distributors such as AK Distribution (see EST-Directory) or radical bookshops. Particular starters for anyone unfamiliar with the politics might include *Freedom* and *Green Line*, although almost everything else has its own reasons for being recommended too.

ANARCHY #25 & #27 (36pp approx A3, \$2 inside US, \$2.50 surface mail and \$5 airmail to UK; c/o C.A.L., POB 1446, Columbia, MO 65205-1446, USA; also available from Counter Productions and AK Distribution)

This is easily the best anarchist mag I've come across, with an excellent mixture of news, reviews and articles. It fits most comfortably into the post-situationist, anti-ideological mode of anarchism, making it a welcome change from the anarcho-liberalism of the British *Freedom*, or the syndicalism of *Black Flag*, both of which tend to be a bit backward-looking. On the down side, it does tend to be more of a talking shop than a focal point for collective struggle. #25 includes articles on Eastern Europe, and extracts from books by Raoul Vaneigem and John Zerzan (excellent), amidst a host of news, reviews and other bits. #27 spotlights "children" and is extremely thought provoking stuff. Bits of it may be pretty impenetrable to the unconverted, but it's worth a look for anyone. Far more modern, intellectual

and critical than anything produced on this side of the Atlantic.

ANTI CLOCK WISE #12 & #13 (12pp A4, 40p UK; P.O. Box 175, Liverpool L69 8DX)

Typically well produced situationist graphics and text. #12 has thoughts on Liverpool, rabble-rousing sloganeering, Art Strike clippings, and numerous other bits. #13 discusses Animal Rights and housing, includes several reviews, and reprints a piece on the "Theory of Spectacular Sex", which for those unfamiliar with situationism is almost certainly not what you think it is!

BLACK FLAG #201 (8pp A3, try 70p UK; BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX)

A wider and more international selection of anarcho-syndicalist news than *DIRECT ACTION*, and correspondingly minimal evidence of real workers' struggle within this country. *BLACK FLAG*'s news coverage is good where it exists, but certainly isn't comprehensive, as far as anarchist or wider politics is concerned. There's also a tendency to print long articles on the history of anarcho-syndicalism, which only alienate the unconverted (and bore most of the converted too). And like too many UK anarchist papers, it's obsessed with the working class, as if the Tory voting workers in this country are somehow supposed to be our only hope for revolution.

BULLETIN OF ANARCHIST RESEARCH #23 (25pp A4, £1 UK to TV Cahill, Dept of Politics, The University, Lancaster LA1; or AK Distribution)

Produced mostly by academics for academics, some of whom (judging by the correspondence) are terrifyingly pedantic. Definitely for the initiated only. It's dominated half by reviews and half by articles. The former are frequently too obscure or opinionated even for me; the latter interesting but excessively intellectual and esoteric. Preaching to the converted elite is not a fun spectator sport.

CLASS WAR #41 (16pp A3, 40p UK; P.O. Box 39, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HN)

Emmm, a bit different to all the other UK anarchist newspapers reviewed here. "Britain's Most Unruly Tabloid" takes the most appalling tabloid style imaginable, completely reversing the political content at the same time. Whether it works in getting across to 'ordinary people' I've no idea, but it's always a good laugh (which is rare amongst political zines), and I don't mean that as an insult. Violent, irreverent, sporting some truly exceptional covers, *CLASS WAR* is guaranteed to offend all the anarcho-liberals (ie me). #41 had lots of poll tax (surprise!), news reports biased beyond belief, green issues (spectacularly ignorant) and so on.

COUNTER INFORMATION #30 (4pp A4, donation; P/H C.I., c/o 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh EH1)

A useful newsletter of political protest in the UK and elsewhere. This one headlines the Gulf War and provides lots of news of direct political action throughout the world, with the usual major focus on anti-poll tax activities. Limited by its very uncritical perspective, and the necessary brevity of the news. No discussion or analysis, meaning that all protest is referred to in a uniformly approving tone, and some of the actions covered I find pretty dubious, but it's all a useful

reminder of the fact that people **aren't** just sitting on their arse while state oppression continues.

CROWBAR #49 (20pp A4, 40p UK from AK Distribution, or a multitude of London-based squatters' groups)

Very highly recommended. Loads of humour, loads of energy, and loads of practical commitment to helping people get into empty houses and stay there. Lots of anti-police material, unsurprisingly, lots of useful contacts and groups, cartoons, advice etc. Also pieces about homocore (gay punk music), and a very sensible attack on Comic Relief. After dragging my way through some of the drier magazines listed here, *Crowbar* came as a refreshing change.

DIRECT ACTION #68 (12pp A3, try 70p UK (payable to DAM); D.A., P.O. Box 106, Rotherham S60 1NW)

"The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism". Yeah, but **which** voice? To the uninitiated, there can sometimes seem to be a bewildering array of anarchist subgroupings. Like all of them though, the Direct Action Movement puts a lot of emphasis on fighting the poll tax. Like that other A/S newspaper, *BLACK FLAG*, it seems to enjoy articles on Syndicalist history, which frankly I find incredibly tedious. Anyway, this issue also has some letters, loads of poll tax stuff, and, compared to other sources, a distinct shortage of other news. But it comes across as reasonable, friendly, and not too intimidating.

ETHICAL CONSUMER #11 (32pp A4, £2 UK; ECRA Publishing Ltd., 100 Gretney Walk, Moss Side, Manchester M15 5ND)

The "Which?" magazine for the ethically sound generation. Nothing to do with anarchism, but interesting anyway. Like it's more commercial cousin, it provides a variety of consumer features and product reports, although with the emphasis upon the most ethical buys rather than the products which perform best. Although frequently open to accusations of being trivial (this issue's products are Soap, Children's Toys, and Ethical and Alternative Investments), it provides a wealth of information on what a bunch of bastards the big corporations really are that is difficult to track down elsewhere. Also in this issue are articles on peat extraction, and consumer boycotts. The investment pieces are excellent and inspiring. Your choice of lightbulb will be permanently changed after reading a previous issue's piece exploring manufacturers' involvement in the nuclear and arms industries ...

FREEDOM #52/3 & #52/4 (8pp A3, 50p UK; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX)

Britain's longest running anarchist magazine. Very liberal compared to most such mags from this island, as opposed to being violent or "worker" orientated, but still maintains an extremely convincing critique of mainstream society. Occasionally, but not always intellectual, it's full of news and topically inspired articles (the Gulf War dominating these issues). This makes it seem to be continually following events rather than seeking to instigate them, making a great conscience but little more. It's liberal tone may make it an easier introduction to anarchist ideas than some of the other magazines reviewed here.

GREEN ANARCHIST #26 (24pp A4, 60p UK; Box H, 34 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1HZ)

Anti-statist and very technophobic, **G.A.** is frequently touted by the press as an example of the insanity of Green politics in the UK. In fact it's a nice reminder that there's more to such things than the middle class in sandals. This issue contains a feature on the "follies of science" (which spoils what is actually a pretty good case by reverting to dogma and prejudice), anarcho/ Green/ Stonehenge news, direct action thoughts including a striking pro-gun poster, reviews, and letters which show a healthy diversity of views. For people who would much rather sabotage their opponents than vote them out.

GREEN LINE #83 (24pp A4, 90p UK; 34 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1HZ)

Again, not specifically an anarchist magazine, but interesting all the same. Being 'green' still occupies a strange no-man's land between being hip and being hippie. Everyone agrees on the problems, everyone agrees that drastic steps must be taken (apart from a few nihilistic technophiles, and the Tories). But to be seen as being 'green' is still somehow unimaginable for too many people. Why this should be I'm not sure: the green movement is the only political movement to combine truly radical liberalism with a serious attempt to change from a competitive to the peaceful paradigm. Even the Green Party, wedded as it is to electoral politics, campaigns on a set of policies potentially more radical and liberatory than any other group outwith the anarchist movement(s). *Green Line* is a particularly good example of this, blending environmentalism with poll tax resistance, pacifism with the Total War Against Capitalism. Extensive, informative, provocative, and anti-establishment, it's well worth a look.

HERE AND NOW #11 (36pp A4, £1 UK, cheques to GPP; Here and Now, c/o Transmission Gallery, 28 King St., Glasgow G1 5QP)

Far and away Britain's most intellectual anarcho-situationist magazine, with a style you will find either impenetrable or delightful. Similarly, the articles will appear either far removed from reality, or wonderfully precise and insightful. *Here and Now's* concerns parallel those of the US zine *Anarchy*: situationism, anarchism, radical art etc. This issue discusses NHS reforms, child abuse professionals, East Germany, Glasgow City of Culture, the Art Strike, computer technology and similar issues. Some of it is thought-provoking and stimulating, some badly thought out and stuck in a morass of radical bias. Tries to be non-dogmatic, but doesn't always succeed. I like all the long words.

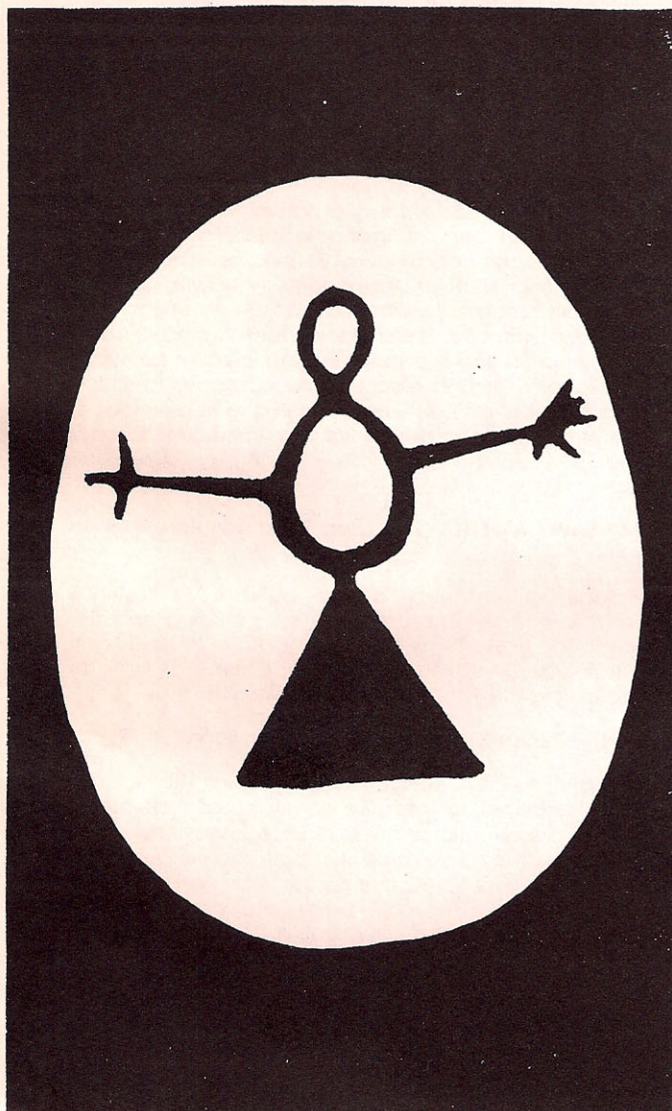
LEISURE (8pp A3, 60p UK; Anticopyright, address elsewhere)

Striking post-situationist graphics and text from the same person who runs Anticopyright. The issue I have includes a Sainsbury's "Shopping Without Money" poster, brief notes on flyposting ideology, revolutionary cancer, thoughts on the Animal Liberation Front, short fiction (Stewart Home meets Kathy Acker?), plus reviews.

LIB ED #15 (24pp A4, £1 UK; Lib ED, The Cottage, The Green, Leire, Leicestershire LE17 5HL)

A very readable and generally very radical journal of liberated education, this issue focusses on children's views,

giving over most of its space to childrens' thoughts on their experiences, hopes and fears. It's a nice return to basics amongst the usual material that fills these pages: Accounts of experimental schools, alternative teaching methods, educational controversies, special issues like sex education and AIDS etc. It's a very useful point of contact for anyone involved in education but discontented with the establishment, and avoids most of the



"trendy leftie" clichés in favour of a liberal, common sense approach. Classroom education only, incidentally, it rarely deals with higher or further education.

NEW ANARCHIST REVIEW #17 (16pp A5, 50p donation UK; AK Distribution or A Distribution, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX)

Short reviews and publicity for new anarchist books sold by the above two distributors.

ORGANISE #21 (16pp A4, 40p + SAE UK; ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St., London E1 7JX)

One of many anarchist magazines coming from a class-struggle perspective, this time explicitly "anarchist communist". Predictably too much concentration on the saintly working class as a result. Also in this issue there is plenty of material on poll tax action, European union (astonishingly coming out in favour of it!), the Gulf war, Gorbachev vs the massed ranks of the proletariat, Trotsky, the Shining Path (Peruvian Marxist terrorists). Most of the writing is intelligent without being intellectual, critical of several sacred cows, and as a result *Organise*, when it's not wasting its space flogging dead horses like Trotsky, can be quite a good read.

POLL TAX RIOT (68pp A5, £1 UK; try AK Distribution, or ACAB Press, BM 8884, London WC1N 3XX)

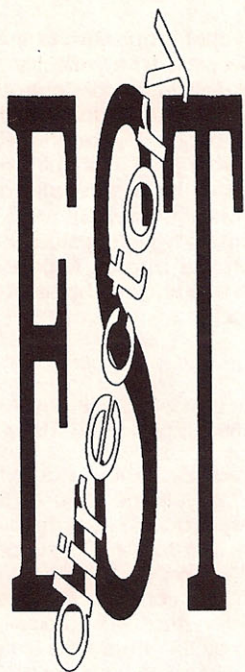
ACAB, in case you didn't know, stands for "All Cops Are Bastards", and this sets the tone of this pamphlet. It consists of a series of accounts of the events in Trafalgar Square and the surrounding area on Saturday 31st March 1990, written by people who witnessed or participated in the poll tax riot. As a chance to explore the other side of a story that was ruthlessly misinterpreted and covered up by the media, it's extremely welcome indeed. Certainly, most of it glorifies the violence, which like most riots lacked even the limited justification of being well-directed, because it wasn't. Fighting the foot-soldiers of capitalism just ensures that the struggle remains ever-distant from the real enemies of the people. As one chapter points out, our country has a **very** long history of violent rebellion against the state, and this booklet is at least a good contribution to the recording of one of the latest incidents. It's likely to offend pacifists, lacks any decent perspective on events, and completely avoids the issues which violent rebellion raises, however.

THERAVEN #12 (96pp A5, £2.50 UK or £3 abroad; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX)

The latest in this series of squarebound anarchist volumes takes as its theme "Communication". The writers mostly come from the anarcho-liberal background found in its sister-publication *Freedom*. One of the more interesting inclusions in this issue is Joe Kelly, tabloid journalist, espousing any compromise with the mainstream that might be required to get anarchist ideas more widely accepted. Also of note is George Barrett's "Objections to Anarchism", twenty-four replies to common criticisms of anarchism as 'naïve and unworkable', which is well worth reading if occasionally a bit unconvincing. There are other worthwhile discussions of the theme, but a lot of the material is too self-involved for non-anarchists, dealing with how anarchists present themselves and their propaganda. On the whole, an interesting read (future issues are to deal with Eastern Europe, Democracy & Land Use).

SOLIDARITY #24 (16pp A4, £1.20 UK; Solidarity (London), c/o 123 Latham Road, London E6 2EA; or AK Distribution)

This one styles itself "A Journal of Libertarian Socialism", and is very disappointing. A brief look at Eastern Europe, a more interesting article on Gandhi, reminiscences on the anarchist historian George Woodcock, and correspondence attacking the Moslem reaction to *The Satanic Verses*. Flimsy.



The idea behind this directory is to list as many sources as possible for cutting-edge music, underground art and other obscure material. The worst problem for anyone interested in this kind of stuff is trying to find it! This issue's listing is short but covers a variety of interesting distributors, labels and other groups. Hopefully next issue will see a much bigger listing. Network! Communicate! Enjoy! Please mention *E.S.T.* and enclose an SAE or IRCs when writing to anyone mentioned below (or anywhere else in this issue). All addresses are United Kingdom unless otherwise specified.

AK DISTRIBUTION (3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, Scotland FK8 2RD)

A comprehensive book mail-order service specialising in anarchist material but dealing with a wide variety of other alternative politics, including a good selection of situationist stuff. Also stocks an excellent range of related magazines, and sells graphic novels, fanzines, t-shirts, badges and secondhand books too. For anyone interested in this sort of material, AK is indispensable.

ANTI-ANTI (37 Pamplins, Basildon, Essex SS15 5BN)

Mail-order service for photocopied matter and cassettes dealing with all the usual "occultural" topics: Burroughs, Timothy Leary, Throbbing Gristle, Crowley, subliminals, computer viruses and so on. They also promise a large selection of music tapes: punk, world music, occult reference, and dance, and have plans to produce a magazine called "Cosmic Joke". Prices are exceptionally reasonable, and as far as I can tell everything is tipped off of somebody else.

ANTICOPYRIGHT (P.O. Box 368, Cardiff CF2 1SQ)

Thoroughly marvellous distributor of "agitational and generally scurrilous flyposters". Send them some money, send them some posters, help cover the world's walls with a variety of anarchist, situationist and plain weird items. Well worth supporting. Current catalogue lists 251 posters.

ARTAMANTAPES (62 Saxby St., Salford, Manchester M6 7RG)

Artaman distribute a number of their own cheap cassettes, featuring the Grey Wolves, KZ, Victor Victim and others, plus more Grey Wolves material released on Strength Recordings. All or most of it comes from the "extreme power electronics" area: harsh, unpleasant, and deliberately violent music, here enhanced with images of fascism.

AUDIOFILE TAPES (Carl Howart/aT, 209-25 18 Avenue, Bay-side, NY 11360, USA)

One of the biggest cassette labels in the states dealing with underground, experimental and non-mainstream musics (others including *Sound of Pig* and *Harsh Reality*), Audiofile's current catalogue includes over 125 releases. Artists include the well-known, like Test Dept and Konstruktivits, and the completely obscure, plus stalwarts of the American cassette scene: Nomuzic, Alien Planetscapes, Cephalic Index, Mental Anguish and If, Bwana. The music varies from psychedelic rock through electronic soundscapes to sound collage. A lot of it is pretty amateurish and undeveloped, some of it is as good as you will find. In Europe contact instead SJ Organization, 11 Rue Fenelon B16, 75010 Paris, France.

CHAINSAW CASSETTES (11 Layton Road, Islington, London N1 0PX)

Catalogue of 14 cheap cassettes by various industrial / electronic / noise bands, with an encouraging commitment to the cassette as a valid medium in its own right. Artists include Operation Mind Control, Chemical Plant, The Invisibles and The Symboliks. See reviews in this issue.

COUNTER PRODUCTIONS (P.O. Box 556, London SE5 0RL)

Mail-order service for magazines and books. This includes surrealist and absurdist literature, poetry, obscure arts mags, anarchist and situationist zines, imported weirdness, alternative music mags, small press stuff and other arcana. From the Fortean Times to Vague to Semiotext(e) to Malice Aforethought Press, this is a 28 page catalogue full of well-known and obscure gems. Invaluable.

EARTHLY DELIGHTS (P.O. Box 1QG, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE99 1QG)

As well as releasing music by Nocturnal Emissions and related artists, Earthly Delights runs a mail-order service stocking material by the likes of Zoviet France, Lustmord, The Hafler Trio and others. They also produce the Magnetizdat series of information cassettes, containing lots of strange aural material (interviews, music, sounds etc) along similar lines to the *Spiral* series produced by the Radio Art Foundation. Also see the review of *Network News* elsewhere in this issue. Eight page catalogue.

EMPTY QUARTER (P.O. Box 87, Ilford, Essex IG1 3HG)

Empty Quarter is a mail-order stockist of "electronics, weird and industrial" music, new and secondhand. The selection somehow manages to range from Depeche Mode to Lustmord without blinking an eye. The rarer and much sought after early industrial material is offered at a high price, and a lot of the new material is available considerably cheaper elsewhere. So, expensive, but selling large numbers of things hard or impossible to find elsewhere.

EXART CASSETTES (P.O. Box 390, 1970 AJ Ijmuiden, Holland)

A Dutch label with a variety of music in its catalogue, with the best known artist probably being Gorgonzola Legs. Their music fits broadly into the cassette underground arena covered by people like Insane Music, IRRE-Tapes and Audiofile, varying from the unlistenable experimental through to off-beam rock. They have a few interesting compilations available too.

IJK-TAPES (c/o Come Back, Kellengasse 7, 6900 Heidelberg 1, Germany)

"A label for spoken words and eloquent noises" says the short flier/catalogue. Surrealist cassettes of narrative (in German) and music.

INSANE MUSIC (c/o Alain Neffe, 2 Grand Rue, B-6190 Trazegnies, Belgium)

One amongst the multitude of independent cassette labels to be found around the world. Insane is run by Alain Neffe and Nadine Bal, both of whom are also members of the groups *Human Flesh* and *Bene Gesserit*. So far, Insane has available 33 compilations, plus cassettes and vinyl by various related bands. Amongst the more well-known people to appear on the compilations are Front Line Assembly, Portion Control, Legendary Pink Dots and Merzbow but there are probably hundreds more. Music veers from experimental through to rock, with a good smattering of the industrial but a particular taste for the humorous. Recommended. (Also see interview in this issue!)

IRRE-TAPES (Barendellstr. 35, 6795 Kindsbach, Germany)

A small but acclaimed cassette label run by Matthias Lang. IRRE has a large number of international contacts, and as a result an impressively international catalogue, currently home to 50 tapes. Better known artists include the likes of Nomuzic, If Bwana and Gregorian George, but there's plenty more here, ranging from off-centre pop through to experimental electronics.

MIND SCAN ELECTRONIC TAPES (Robert Maycock, 71 Millmead Road, Margate, Kent CT9 3QJ)

Various very cheap cassettes, with distinctly crude and minimal packaging (typed and photocopied inlay), of electronic music by people like Satori, Thee Grey Wolves and Nostalgie Eternelle. See reviews elsewhere.

POISON PLANT (7 Woodsend Place, Rockville, MD 20854, USA)

A small electronic music label from the States, run by the collective effort of the artists involved. Their music varies from the avant-garde to the New Age, with various strange things to be found in between. Four tapes reviewed this issue.

STAALPLAAT (P.O. Box 11455, 1001 GL Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Simply one of the best mail order services that I know of for post-industrial, new experimental music in Europe. Releases on their own label include cassettes and CDs by people from Laibach to the Hafler Trio to the Legendary Pink Dots, as well as videos by Survival Research Laboratories. They also stock labels like Industrial Records (various cassette reissues), Touch, United Dairies, Earthly Delights, and a host of excellent European labels. Music covered in the latest 18 page catalogue includes Nurse With Wound, Test Dept, Asmus Tietchens, Negativland, plus hundreds of others. Exchange rates for Dutch Guilders are usually pretty reasonable too!

TEMPLE PRESS LIMITED (P.O. Box 227, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3GL)

The publishing arm of the Temple of Psychick Youth runs a mail-order service stocking both Temple Press' own titles, plus occult books from Mandrake Press, Pagan News and various others, including U.S. imports. Stuff by Crowley, Anton Wilson, Leary and many others. Also videos by Derek Jarman, Kenneth Anger, Burroughs and co. Some excellent and hard-to-get stuff in this eight page catalogue.

T.O.P.Y. HEART (P.O. Box 2055, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9NB)

One of the few remaining active Temple of Psychick Youth Access Points, although I get the impression that a lot of the activity is the work of only one person. Publishes reasonably regular bulletins which are the best source of TOPY information and news that I see. Merchandise list includes numerous interesting TOPY publications, plus lots of stuff by Austin Osman Spare and W. S. Burroughs, and material on Psychic TV and Coum Transmissions. Dreamachine, Raudive diodes, it's all here, as is the inevitable Charles Manson trial statement. Also sells mail-order books as *Heart Action*, including a similar selection to Temple Press, plus herbalism, homeopathy etc.

T.O.P.Y. LONDON (P.O. Box 1455, London N4 1JT)

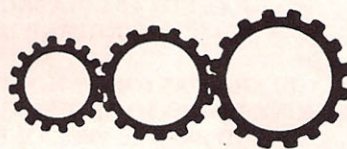
Publishes irregular but interesting bulletins, and sells various TOPY-type cassettes (34 items listed in most recent flier) and written material, with particular interests in obscure Christian anti-occult propaganda, Leary and Burroughs. Well worth contacting. Last bulletin ran to 28 pages.

TOUCH (13 Oswald Road, London SW17 7SS)

Recording label and distribution service, with interests ranging from "world" music to experimental music, both post-industrial and avant-garde. Recent CD releases include Andrew MacKenzie (of the Hafler Trio), Etant Donnes, Strafe Für Rebellion, and recordings from an Albanian folk festival. They have some excellent compilations available, all produced to a very high standard, too. Material distributed includes the Spiral series of sound archives, various books, similar labels to the ones Staalplaat carries, plus Recommended Records and various world music labels.

ULTIMA THULE (1 Conduit Street, Leicester LE2 0JN)

"The New-Music Specialists" they claim, rather dubiously I have to say. Vast catalogue of imported and homegrown new music: experimental, post-industrial, avant garde, New Age, synthesiser, "progressive" rock and so on. They also produce **AUDION** magazine (see elsewhere for review) and the mail-order service shares that zine's particular musical bias. Their own cassette label, **Auricle**, has releases loads of music by similar artists, from the obscure (Biomechanoid) to the not quite so obscure (Asmus Tietchens, Conrad Schnittler). Recent catalogues ran to 60 pages including various supplements, full of excellent, hard to find music, although now that they also run a proper shop, mail-order lists are a lot less informative.



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Address: E.S.T., c/o B. Duguid, G/L 128 Oran St., Glasgow G20 8LR. Telephone 041-946 8372. Enclose an SAE, IRC or order to guarantee reply: I cannot emphasise this enough! Numerous people have failed to do so and are not going to get replies. I'm putting enough of my own money into the zine as it is. Sorry!

Subscriptions: Until E.S.T. finds it feet, I'm only taking advance payment for one issue at a time. Next issue can be advance ordered for £1.50 UK (cheque preferred, to B.Duguid please) / \$4 US (cash). IMOs are acceptable, cheques on non-UK banks are not. Any other **cash** currency please add the equivalent of an extra £2 sterling to cover exchange charges. If you have any difficulty with getting money to me, get in touch and we may be able to work something out.

Contributions: Are **very** welcome, be they articles, interviews, reviews, news, music, or whatever. Until such time as this zine makes any money, it obviously can't afford to pay anyone. Contributors get one or more free copies of the mag. Contributions should be preferably typed, or legibly handwritten. Contributions on IBM-compatible floppy disc (any size) are particularly welcome. I use WordPerfect 5.0 but can also accept ASCII files and some other word-processor formats. Music for review can be on any of the usual formats (record, tape or CD). Videos acceptable on VHS European-format only.

Deadline: Next issue will come out as soon as I have enough material to fill 32-40 pages, hopefully September or October. Send material sooner rather than later though! Apologies to all those who've waited for this issue a bit longer than I originally promised - I hope it was worth the wait!

Music: I have no intention of doing flexidiscs or compilation tapes to accompany the zine, much as they seem a good idea. I simply don't have the time to organise them. If you want to hear the music reviewed in this zine, go out and buy it! For people unfamiliar with these kinds of music, several compilations and samplers exist providing good overviews of various types, and I'm happy to recommend them to anyone who asks. If you can't find any of the music reviewed here, get in touch and I'll try and track it down. Bear in mind that much of the more obscure material is

available only through mail order and one or two specialist shops.

Electric Shock Treatment is © 1991 Brian Duguid and Original Authors, to prevent people trying to make money out of any of the contents. Any material may be reproduced freely for review or publicity purposes. For other purposes, just ask, and I'll almost certainly say yes. *E.S.T.* is not produced for personal profit, which is lucky, because this issue is making a considerable loss! *Electric Shock Treatment - Music from the End of Time* is the thirteenth Blue Shaboo Presentation, and was produced entirely at the First Church of Xajus³.

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Next issue:

Interviews with *Zo-viet*France*, *Asmus Tietchens* and a feature on *Direction Music* (all held over from this issue due to lack of space), plus hopefully interviews with *Test Dept.* and *FiniTribe*; a bit about *factor X*; UK occult magazines; lots of reviews; and a couple of other articles too.

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